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Studies on the Teaching of Jesus

Studies.
on the
Teaching of Jesus
As Recorded in the
Synoptic Gospels

By
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Trin. Coll. Oron., and New Coll. Edin.

London
British College
Christian Union.
22, Warwick Lane,
E.C. 1903.

PREFACE

THESE Studies are a farther addition to the series published by the British College Christian Union. The aim of that series is to provide a scheme for Bible Study, in which on six days of each week a passage of the Bible is given for study, with brief notes to aid the student, while the seventh day is devoted to a review of the week's work in a form that can be made the basis of discussion at a meeting. The Studies are intended primarily for use in College Bible Circles, but there is no reason why they should not be used by private students.

The teaching of Jesus is so great and inexhaustible a subject, that one cannot escape serious misgiving in publishing anything professing to deal with it. Such publication should be the result of far longer study and reflection than I have been able to give. The only excuse for the appearance of these Studies is that something of the kind was required by the B.C.C.U., and no one else could be found to undertake the task. I have tried to qualify myself by reading the best books in English upon the subject; and I have sought to avoid setting down anything that has not the support of those who may be regarded as authorities. A list of the books upon which I have relied will be found in the Introduction. And there is one thing which encourages me. As I have come day by day into contact with the great words and thoughts of Jesus, I have derived from them such help and illumination, that I feel that if these Studies serve only to introduce some others to those wonderful words, they will not have been issued in vain.

The aim of these Studies is not to provide a commentary upon every recorded saying of Jesus, but to give a general and fairly complete presentation of His teaching in its most important aspects.

Accordingly, it has not seemed necessary to try to secure at all costs that every saying in the Synoptic Gospels should receive detailed treatment in some part of the Studies. One or two difficult passages have been deliberately omitted; their meaning could not be arrived at without a discussion too long for these pages, and it was felt that to give them such consideration would thrust them into a false prominence and would disturb the balance of the whole. But passages of this kind are few, and by far the larger part of Jesus' sayings will be examined in detail somewhere in the course of the Studies. Some of the more important passages will be considered more than once.

These Studies have been limited to the teaching of Jesus in so far as it is recorded in the first three Gospels, partly because that portion of Jesus' teaching differs considerably in form from the discourses recorded in the Fourth Gospel, and affords ample material for one set of Studies, partly because a set of Studies on St. John's Gospel has already appeared in this Series.

My thanks are due to my friend, Mr. S. BAND, and my brother, Mr. H. W. OLDHAM, who have kindly read most of the manuscript and sent me criticisms and suggestions; and to my wife for much valuable help, especially in the preparation of the Index and the correction of the proofs.

J. H. OLDHAM.

June 1903.

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Κύριε, πρὸς τίνα ἀπελευσόμεθα ; ῥήματα ζωῆς αἰωνίου
ἔχεις.

*Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of
eternal life.*

“ JOHN vi. 68.

INTRODUCTION.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF JESUS' TEACHING.

THE Teaching of Jesus possesses a special interest for our age. Historical enquiry has brought His earthly life into a new and unique prominence. The world has become aware that He is the greatest force in its history, and even intellectual curiosity impels men to examine minutely every detail regarding Him and every word He spoke, in the hope that they may discover His secret. Some, whose faith is shaken by the perplexities of modern thought, find that their doubts come to rest at Jesus. They have unhesitating confidence in Him. Whatever He taught they are ready to do. Others, feeling the weight of the pessimistic tendencies of the time, turn to Jesus to save them from despair. If He fails, they know of no one else. Did He really bring Good Tidings into the world? And if so, what are they? •

But it is not only to our own generation that Jesus' Teaching is important. For the Christian believer His words must always possess a supreme authority. If God's revelation of Himself was progressive, in Jesus it reached its goal. Everything else in the Bible is to be judged and interpreted in the light of His words, and of His life.

Jesus Himself attached very great importance to His teaching. The greater part of His public life was given to teaching.* His disciples addressed Him as Master, or Teacher.† He believed that His teaching would never be superseded.‡ He regarded His message as so important that the destiny of men would be determined by their attitude towards it.§ He declared His words to be "Spirit and life"; the truth of which assertion His disciples proved, for when every earthly consideration would have led them to desert Him, they felt themselves constrained to remain, because they were convinced that He had "the words of eternal life."||

At the same time we have always to bear in mind that Jesus Himself is greater than His teaching. Mere words count for

* Mt 417. 23, Mk 10¹, Lk 9¹¹, Mt 26⁵⁵ etc.
§ Mt 7²⁴⁻²⁷.

• † Mt 8¹⁹ 12³⁸ etc.
|| Jn. 6⁶³. 68. •

‡ Lk 21³³.

little ; it is the personality behind them that gives them their force. The power which Jesus has gained over mankind has been due more to the wonderful life which He lived than to the wonderful truths which He taught. If the apostolic view of Christianity be the true one, the supreme significance of Jesus is found not so much in His words as in His whole life and death. And so, while we treasure and study the words of Jesus as the most precious which have ever fallen from human lips, let us constantly keep before us the thought that they are only a part of the revelation which He has given to men and of the good which He has brought to them.

II. THE RELATION OF JESUS TO HIS OWN AGE AND TO THE PAST.

Jesus was born at a particular period in the world's history, and spent His life in a particular intellectual and social environment. He spoke a certain language. He used ideas and forms of thought that were current at the time. He delivered His teaching in relation to existing conditions. Observe, for example, the large place given in His teaching to criticism of the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. Everything that we can learn of the customs and beliefs of His contemporaries will shed light upon the meaning of His teaching.*

It is still more important to remember that Jesus came as the crown of a long period of preparation. He spoke to men who accepted the Scriptures of the Old Testament as a Divine revelation, and all of whose thinking was coloured by the ideas contained in these writings. Jesus Himself regarded that revelation as a divinely-appointed preparation for Himself.† The Old Testament was the source from which He drew strength and nourishment for His own life, and the starting-point of all His teaching.‡ He did not in His teaching concern Himself with the elements of religious knowledge, but started from the common ground upon which both He and His hearers already stood. We cannot understand His teaching at all except in the light of Old Testament ideas. Consequently it has been necessary in what follows to include one or two Old Testament studies. To some these may seem less interesting. But labour spent upon them will be well repaid.

III. THE FORM OF JESUS' TEACHING.

(a) *Its occasional character.*—We may perhaps have been tempted at times to wish that Jesus had left for the guidance of the Church a creed drawn up by His own hand. It might seem as if

* Students should read chap. i. in Stevens, *The Teaching of Jesus*.

† Lk 24:27-41.

‡ Cf. Study LXIV.

this would have prevented many bitter controversies, and have settled once for all what is essential in Christianity. Nothing is more clear, however, than that Jesus did not do this. We may, indeed, feel sure that Jesus had determined before He entered on His ministry what were the great truths which it was His mission to proclaim, and that He pursued a carefully considered plan in His training of the inner circle of His disciples. But He showed no desire to leave behind Him a carefully formulated system. He did not build up elaborate arguments, or draw fine distinctions, or use technical phraseology. He spoke not in the language of the schools, but in that of common life. It is surprising how large a part of His recorded teaching was unpremeditated, springing out of some casual incident, or being called forth by some question of His listeners.* So far from being a drawback, this occasional character of Jesus' teaching is the very thing that has given to it permanence and vitality. A theological system must necessarily be expressed in the language and forms of thought of a particular age, and cannot be permanent. But human life and its supreme interests remain always the same. It is because Jesus' teaching is not abstract or technical, but deals simply and directly with human life in its varied aspects, and with the human soul and its eternal needs and aspirations, that it possesses an undying freshness, truth, and power.

(b) *Aphoristic and paradoxical sayings.*—Jesus' method, as we have seen, was not that of a systematic teacher. He preferred to throw out the truths He desired to teach in the form of isolated, brief, pregnant sentences.† Sayings of this kind were likely to fix themselves firmly in the memory of the popular audiences which He addressed. But this method had an even greater advantage. It was perhaps the only way in which Jesus could reveal the profound and complex truth He came to teach. His insight into the heart of things was too large and varied to be set forth in a formulated, ordered system; the mind could not grasp the whole at once. And so Jesus took one aspect of truth after another, and made it blaze out in all its grandeur, allowing it for the moment to obscure all others by its brilliancy.‡ In this way the richness and fulness of His teaching might be felt and appropriated, though the mind might not be able to completely harmonise all its elements. The sayings of Jesus still prove themselves to be an inexhaustible mine.

The adoption of this method gives sometimes to Jesus' teaching the appearance of being one-sided and contradictory. He states with equal force opposing aspects of a truth, and allows His hearers

* Cf. e.g. Mt 85-13. 18-22 91-8. 10-13. 14-17. 35-38 112-19 121-13. 22-26 151-20 165-12 1724-27 1821-35 193-12. 13-15. 16-30 2020-28 2118-22. 23-32 2215-40 etc.

† E.g. Mk 217. 27 422. 24. 25 715 835. 38 935. 40 1031 1217. 27 etc.

‡ Cf. Caird, *Evolution of Religion*, vol. ii. pp. 90, 91.

to make the reconciliation for themselves.* He frequently makes an unqualified statement, where some qualification seems needed. He flashes out a great truth, and allows it to do its work, leaving men to discover for themselves where it has to be complemented and limited by other truths.† In this Jesus' method differed completely from that of the Scribes. They concerned themselves with *rules*, and delighted in considering all possible circumstances in which they were applicable, and how far exceptions might be permitted. There thus grew up a system of casuistry. Jesus, on the contrary, laid down not rules, but *principles*. He purposely disregarded all circumstances which might obscure or limit the application of the principle. He demanded from His disciples a whole-hearted acceptance of the principle, and allowed them to learn how to apply it for themselves.‡

It follows that, in the first place, we must beware, in interpreting the sayings of Jesus, of forcing any isolated statement to its extreme logical conclusion. We must seek to understand Jesus' teaching as whole, and to do justice to every side of it. We must avoid the temptation, as has been said, "to cast away one-half of the lesson in order to save the other."§ It is better to leave a seeming contradiction unresolved, and wait patiently for further knowledge, than to reach a false and superficial simplicity by simply ignoring or explaining away some part of Jesus' teaching. And, secondly, we must remember that nothing will help us more to understand the words of Jesus than spiritual receptivity.|| There are hard sayings, which may seem to baffle the understanding, but in which men of humble and receptive hearts find strength and nourishment for the moral life. Jesus throws His teaching into the world for those who will receive it; the foolish wrest it to their own purposes, but the wise, who seek to obey it, find it to be a lamp unto their feet. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

(c) *The Parables*.—A large part of Jesus' teaching was given in parables. In most of the parables some fact or incident in the natural world is used as an illustration of a religious truth in the spiritual world; the force of the parable lies in the parallelism. Such are the parables of the Sower (Mt 13^{1ff}), the Leaven (Mt 13³³), etc. In other parables the story is not so much an illustration, in a different sphere, of a spiritual truth, as a *typical instance* of the working of spiritual laws and principles. Such are the parables of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10^{30ff}), the Pharisee and the Publican (Lk 18^{9ff}), etc.¶

With regard to the interpretation of the parables, the important

* Cf. e.g. Mt 12³⁰ and Mk 9⁴⁰; and we shall find in the following Studies that there are passages which seem to give contradictory answers to such questions as, Is the Kingdom of God present or future? Is it outward or inward? Is it a gift or a task? Did Jesus fulfil the Jewish Messianic expectations? etc.

† Cf. Study L. 1, 3.

‡ Cf. Wendt, *The Teaching of Jesus*, i. 134-135.

§ Caird, *loc. cit.*

|| Cf. Mt 11²⁵.

¶ Cf. Sanxlay in Hastings' *BD*, ii. 617.

question arises, How far are we to seek to find a spiritual meaning for all the details? For long the allegorical method of interpretation, in which a religious meaning was given to every detail, held sway. For example, the twopence given by the Good Samaritan to the keeper of the inn were regarded as standing for the two Sacraments. In modern times there has been a reaction to the other extreme, and it is asserted that each parable is intended to teach only one central lesson, and that the details have no didactic purpose. This principle of interpretation is certainly the sounder of the two. The analogy between the natural and spiritual worlds holds in a broad, striking way, but the parallelism cannot be expected to extend to minute details. Moreover, as we have already seen, it was Jesus' method to teach great truths in a pointed, forcible manner, not to draw out elaborate and fanciful allegories. It is not unnatural to suppose that details are sometimes added to the parable, not to convey further spiritual meaning, but to make the picture more vivid and arresting. The details in the description of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10^{34, 35}) are given only to show the reality and abundance of his kindness. On the other hand, it cannot be doubted that in some cases the details are intended to bear a spiritual meaning; Jesus so interprets the parables of the Sower and the Tares (Mt 13^{18ff. 36ff.}). No absolute rule for interpretation can be laid down. Our chief care should be to first of all grasp the main lesson which the parable is intended to teach; the details may be given a meaning in proportion as they serve to enforce that lesson. "Every parable has its central idea, and whatever can be related to that idea may be fairly brought within its scope. To press mere coincidences with the picturesque accessories of a parable may be permissible as rhetoric, but can have no higher value."*

We have to be careful how we use the parables as a basis for doctrine. Trench says that "the parables may not be made primary sources of doctrine. Doctrines otherwise and already established may be illustrated, or indeed further confirmed by them; but it is not allowable to constitute doctrine first by their aid."† This is perhaps to put the matter too strongly. The whole object of some of the parables is to assert a definite truth. The parables in Lk 15 are clearly intended to teach that God loves the sinful, and the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican to show the attitude of mind which is acceptable in the sight of God. But Trench is certainly right when he pleads for caution; "for from the literal to the figurative, from the clearer to the more obscure, has ever been recognised as the order of Scripture interpretation."† We must first be sure that a parable is expressly meant to teach some par-

* Cf. Sanday, *loc. cit.* On the whole subject, see further, Stevens, *The Teaching of Jesus*, pp. 42-45.

† *Notes on the Parables*, p. 41.

ticular lesson, and that this meaning is the only one which it can bear, before we can safely draw from its teaching any doctrinal conclusion. Further, we must always bear in mind that, in so far as a parable is a comparison of natural things with spiritual, the analogy does indeed convey a truth to our minds, but it does this by way of suggestion, not by way of exact statement. Illustration is not definition. For example, the parable of the Prodigal Son teaches us that God treats sinners as a father does his erring son; but we cannot argue from this that God is a Father, until we have first asked exactly what we mean when we apply the idea of Fatherhood to God, and in what respects the resemblance between Him and an earthly father can be maintained. Similarly, while the representation of the forgiveness of sins as the cancelling of a debt (Lk 7⁴⁰⁻⁵⁰, Mt 18²³⁻²⁵) suggests to us many true ideas, there are some respects in which the metaphor of a debt is insufficient to represent moral obligations; e.g. there is a sense in which a man's moral obligations cannot be discharged by another. It has been truly said that "many of the errors into which theological controversialists have been betrayed may be traced to the tendency to deal with figures and metaphors as exact equivalents for spiritual realities." *

IV. LITERATURE.

The following books have been consulted in the preparation of these Studies:—

- Robertson, *Our Lord's Teaching* (A. & C. Black, "The Guild Library." Paper, 6d; cloth, 1s. 6d.).
 Stevens, *The Teaching of Jesus* (Macmillan Company. 3s. 6d.).
 Gilbert, *The Revelation of Jesus* (Macmillan Company. 5s. net.).
 Bruce, *The Kingdom of God* (T. & T. Clark. 7s. 6d.).
 Wendt, *The Teaching of Jesus* (T. & T. Clark. 2 vols., 21s.).
 Dalman, *The Words of Jesus* (T. & T. Clark. 7s. 6d. net.).
 Stalker, *The Christology of Jesus* (Hodder & Stoughton. 5s.).
 Peabody, *Jesus Christ and the Social Question* (Macmillan Company. 6s.).
 Matthews, *The Social Teaching of Jesus* (Macmillan Company. 6s.).
 Seeley, *Ecce Homo* (Macmillan & Co. 5s.).
 Beyschlag, *New Testament Theology* (T. & T. Clark. 2 vols., 18s. net.).
 Stevens, *Theology of the New Testament* (T. & T. Clark. 12s.).

On the Parables—

- Trench, *Notes on the Parables* (Kegan Paul, Trench, & Co. 3s. 6d.).
 Dods, *The Parables of our Lord* (Hodder & Stoughton. First Series (Mt), 3s. 6d.; Second Series (Lk), 3s. 6d.).
 Bruce, *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ* (Hodder & Stoughton. 12s.).

* Caird, *Fundamental Ideas of Christianity*, ii. p. 172; cf. pp. 172-187.

On the Sermon on the Mount—

Gore, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Murray. 3s. 6d.).

Trench, *Augustine's Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount* (Kegan Paul, Trench, & Co. 10s. 6d.).

Commentaries—

Bruce on *St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke*, in the "Expositor's Greek Testament" (Hodder & Stoughton. 28s.).

Swete on *St. Mark* (Macmillan & Co. 15s.).

Plummer on *St. Luke* (T. & T. Clark. 12s.).

Godet on *St. Luke* (T. & T. Clark. 2 vols., 10s. 6d.).

Students are strongly advised to get the first two books mentioned. Both are by scholars, and are almost perfect of their kind. They differ in style and method, and may be profitably read together. Professor Stevens' is the more recent (1901), and takes full account of all the problems raised by modern criticism. A clearer and more trustworthy guide could hardly be found. Those who have not read *Ecce Homo* should take an early opportunity of doing so; it is full of suggestion. On the relation of Jesus' teaching to social questions nothing could be better than Peabody (cf. p. 99). Of the other books, perhaps Bruce's *The Kingdom of God* would be most rewarding to the student. Those who want a good practical exposition of the Parables should buy Dods'. Of Commentaries, those named are the best. Others are Meyer and Alford on the Three Gospels, Morison on *St. Matthew* and *St. Mark*, Gould on *St. Mark*, and the volumes in the "Cambridge Bible for Schools." The article by Professor Sanday on "Jesus Christ" in Hastings' *Bible Dictionary* (containing a long section on His teaching) will richly reward perusal. Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, is invaluable for the determination of the meaning of Jesus' language in the light of Jewish usage; but it is a book for the professional scholar rather than the ordinary reader, and presupposes a knowledge of Hebrew. Books which deal with special aspects of Jesus' Teaching will be referred to in the footnotes.

V. THE USE OF THE STUDIES.

1. The words of Jesus are at the same time simple and profound. They were addressed to the common people, and understood by them; and yet the wisest men have felt that they could never exhaust them. No great learning is needed to apprehend their meaning, but they will yield up their riches only to patient, prayerful meditation. We must gaze long and steadfastly into their depths, we must turn them over and over again in our minds, we must feed upon them until they become part of ourselves. This is the essential part of our study, and if we allow anything to turn us aside from it we shall lose the chief good.

2. In working out each Study,—

(a) Glance back at the outline at the beginning of the Section in which the Study falls, in order to see its connection with what has gone before ;

(b) Turn up the passage or passages of Scripture appointed to be read, and note briefly to what they refer ;

(c) Read rapidly through the Study, to see the reasons why these passages have been chosen for that day, and what points in them require special attention ;

(d) Turn back to the passages themselves, and go through them carefully word by word, using as far as may be desired such exegetical notes or helps as are given in the Study ;

(e) *If the Study seems too long, concentrate attention on one or two points, and leave the rest on one side ; do not fail to give to at least some of the words of Jesus Himself careful examination and meditation.*

Some discretion will have to be exercised by the student himself. Sometimes a passage is given for the sake of its main lesson, and need not be studied in detail at that point. Sometimes a long passage is given in order that the whole context may be before the student, although the material required for that particular Study may be contained in a single verse. The important thing is to choose *some* verses from among those appointed for the day, as many as time will permit—and examine and ponder them with care. All the verses given at the head of the Study should be read if possible. But no student need feel bound to look up all the references that occur in the course of the Study. These are often added for the sake of those who wish to give fuller consideration to the subject, and to gather all the material that is available on the matter in hand.

3. The work on the seventh day of each week is intended to be a review of the week's Studies. This will be best carried out by considering the questions suggested for United Study. Students will find it of the greatest benefit if they will compel themselves to *write out* the answers to these questions. To deal thoroughly in this way with one or two questions will be found more profitable than to vaguely answer all. Definiteness will make the Study interesting, haziness will destroy all profit. Make up your mind to get something clear and tangible out of the review. Choose one or two points that seem to you most important, and insist on getting definite written answers to such questions as these—What did Jesus teach on this matter? What difference does His teaching make? What difference does it make to *me*?

VI. THE UNITED STUDY.

1. The Study on the seventh day of each week indicates some of the points that may profitably be considered at the weekly meeting,

• *Bible Circle.* If the members have been doing their work thoroughly during the week, there will be no lack of material for discussion. The failure of a Bible Circle meeting may almost always be traced to neglect by the members of their daily Study.

2. A great deal will depend upon the leader of the Circle. The same member should act as leader throughout the whole course. The leader should prepare more thoroughly than any of the other members. *But he should carefully avoid taking a more prominent part in the discussion.* His aim should be (a) to see that all the members contribute their share to the discussion, and that the conversation is not allowed to fall into the hands of two or three ; (b) to decide beforehand what are the most important points upon which attention should be concentrated, and how many minutes can profitably be allotted to each ; (c) to keep the discussion from becoming irrelevant, trivial, or controversial.

3. At the Circle meeting, above all things avoid vague and general assertions. Let all conclusions be stated in a clear and definite form. On no account allow any statement to pass, *unless it is supported by evidence*. Let the leader make sure that at any rate the material relating to the subject in these Studies is understood and assimilated. If there is any tendency to vagueness, turn back to the sentences in the Studies bearing on the subject, and go through them word by word, seeing how far members find themselves able to agree.

4. In some instances the questions suggested for the United Study may prove too many and too full. If this is so, the leader must make a selection. The Circle need not feel bound to discuss all the questions suggested. The leader must use his own judgment in holding the balance between unprofitable haste and unnecessary prolixity in the discussion of each question. The questions which seem to the writer to be on the whole the most profitable for discussion have been marked with an asterisk.

5. It may be found advantageous to assign the various questions in the United Study to different members of the Circle *a week in advance*, in order that each member may give special attention to one question. *But this should on no account be allowed to interfere with the regular daily Study of every member.* If this plan is followed, the leader will find it a great advantage to keep a week ahead of the others in his private study, so as to be ready to allot the questions for the following week.

6. Time should be set apart for prayer, both at the beginning and at the end of the Bible Circle meeting.

OUTLINE OF STUDIES.

Jesus' Teaching about God, I.-VII.

The Kingdom of God, VIII.-XXI.

The Blessings of the Kingdom, XXII.-XXXV.

The Righteousness of the Kingdom, XXXVI.-LVI.

Jesus' Teaching about Social Questions, LVII.-LXIII.

The Relation of Jesus' Teaching to the Old Testament, LXIV.-LXVII.

The Conditions of Entering the Kingdom, LXVIII.-LXXIII.

The Teaching of Jesus concerning Himself, LXXIV.-XCI.

The Earthly Growth and Development of the Kingdom, XCII.-XCVIII.

The Last Things, XCIX.-CXII.

STUDIES I.-VII.

JESUS' TEACHING ABOUT GOD.

Jesus' Acceptance of the Old Testament Revelation of God, I.

The New Revelation of God, II.

The Way in which Jesus revealed the Father, III.

The Prodigal Son, IV.

Is God the Father of all Men? V.

"Holy Father," VI.

I.

Read Mk 12²⁸⁻³⁰, 26, 27, 78, 9.

1. In all religions the fundamental question is the view taken of God. Hence our first enquiry must be—What was the thought of Jesus about God?

2. Jesus takes the existence of God for granted. He never seeks to prove it; nor would His hearers have expected Him to do so. The Hebrew mind was troubled by no doubts upon this question (cf. Ps 14¹).

3. He further takes for granted that God has revealed Himself in the past history of Israel. He is “the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” The Old Testament contains His “commandment.” See the passages for to-day’s Study; these will come up again in other connections, and be studied in detail later. What we want to note and reflect upon to-day is—(a) That Jesus was certain that God *is*, and that He may be known by men; and (b) that Jesus accepted and started from the Revelation of God given in the Old Testament.

4. Those who have time may note the following passages in which Jesus emphasised in His teaching attributes of God which already belonged to the OT conception of Him:—Mk 10²⁷, cf. Gn 18¹⁴, Zec 8⁶; Mk 10¹⁸, cf. Mt 32¹; Lk 16¹⁵, cf. 1 S 16⁷, Jer 17^{10, 19}; Lk 12²⁴, cf. Ps 147⁹ etc.

II.

Read Mt 6^{8, 9}, 7¹¹, Ps 103¹³.

1. Jesus adopted the OT ideas about God; but He also gave to the world an entirely new conception of God. He taught men to call Him FATHER.

2. But was this conception of God new? Heathen poets had called God the Father of men.* In the OT God was regarded as the Father of Israel (Ex 4²²); and especially of its King (2 S 7¹⁴ etc.); and as showing a Fatherly tenderness towards individuals (Ps 103¹³, cf. Is 63¹⁶). The same conception is also found in later Jewish literature.

* Cf. e.g. Homer, Ζεὺς πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε.

3. In what sense, then, is the teaching of Jesus new? We may answer—

(a) While others had caught an occasional glimpse of this truth, Jesus made it the central and guiding thought of all His teaching. "Fatherhood is no longer *one* attribute among many, but it is a central attribute which gives colour to all the rest" (Sanday).* As a matter of fact and of history, it is through Jesus, and through Him alone, that men have learned to know God as their Father.

(b) He immensely enlarged and deepened the meaning of the word Father. By His own perfect and unbroken communion with His Father, and by His perfect exhibition of God's love to men, He gave men an utterly new conception of the depths of tenderness, sympathy, and love in the heart of God, and of what it meant to live as God's Son.

(c) He declared that this relationship was open to *every individual*, to man as man.

4. In Mt 7¹¹ the earthly relationship is shown to be only an imperfect image and shadow of the heavenly. God's fatherly goodness as far surpasses the love of any earthly parent as His perfect holiness transcends man's imperfection ("ye being evil").

5. The richness and fulness of this revelation of God will be illustrated in later Studies. It is enough to-day to have learnt to say "Our Father." But let us begin to ask ourselves what is involved in such a thought of God. It has been said that this "revelation which Jesus gave undoubtedly marks the greatest advance in the religious history of mankind."† Do you think that such a statement can be justified?

III.

Read Lk 2⁴⁹, Mt 11²⁵⁻²⁷.

1. Jesus taught men to know God as their Father *chiefly by His own perfect realisation of that relationship*. His teaching flowed out of His own inmost experience. He lived in the perfect consciousness of God as His Father, and by such a life revealed to men the reality and meaning of the experience into which He called them to enter.

2. The one glimpse which we have of the boyhood of Jesus (Lk 2⁴⁹) shows that He already possessed, in the measure possible

* Hastings' *BD*, ii. 209.

† Gilbert, *The Revelation of Jesus*, p. 3.

to His years, that consciousness of God and of His own relationship to Him, which was to be the great revelation of His life.

3. Throughout His life He always, when He addresses God, calls Him "Father" (except in Mt 27⁴⁶, which is a quotation from the 22nd Psalm).^{*} This was something new. In the Psalms, full as they are of devotion and an earnest desire for nearness to God, we never find Him addressed as "Father."

4. In Mt 11²⁵⁻³⁰ (Lk 10^{21, 22}) we have the supreme revelation of the intimacy and glory of Jesus' relation to the Father.

The context of the passage should be noted. Jesus' thoughts seem to have been dwelling, on the one hand, upon the unbelief of most of His countrymen (Mt 11²¹⁻²⁴), so strange and so surprising (Jn. 11¹); and, on the other, upon the no less surprising success of the efforts of His little band of ignorant, feeble disciples (Lk 10¹⁷⁻²⁰). In both circumstances He recognises His FATHER's pleasure, and His heart is filled with gratitude and joyful resignation (Mt 11^{25, 26}). Dr. Stalker has a suggestive exposition of the whole passage.[†] "The opening words (*i.e.* of v.²⁷) have been very variously interpreted. . . . The meaning most consistent with the context seems to be, that all His fortunes are of Divine appointment—the disagreeable as well as the agreeable—all are making together for good; and in this assurance His Spirit finds rest. But the next words are those which carry us into the sanctuary of His secret life . . . and the saying is an incomparable expression of mutual intimacy, serene trust, and perfect love. No wonder that Jesus burst out of His soliloquy with the memorable words of v.²⁸. He felt in Himself a joy great enough to satisfy the whole world. He held the secret of peace, and could invite all to come and receive it from Him."

5. We study this passage to-day as describing an *experience* of perfect intimacy with, and perfect confidence in, the Father, which Jesus first brought into the world (v.²⁷), and which *He invites all men to come and share* (vv.²⁸⁻³⁰). We shall come back to the verses later, to consider what light they throw upon the nature of Jesus' own Person. We dwell to-day upon the experience of Jesus as something that may become ours; whether there is something in Jesus different from ourselves, will be asked later.

IV.

Read Lk 15¹¹⁻³².

1. Jesus not only knew God as His own Father; He desired that others should share the same experience. He says not only "My Father," but also "your Father."[‡]

2. In an exquisite parable He describes the nature of God's Fatherly love to men. The purpose of this parable is not so much

^{*} See Mt 11²⁵⁻²⁷, 28, 39, 42, Lk 23^{34, 46}. Other passages in which Jesus speaks of "My Father" are Mt 7²¹ 10³² 12⁵⁰ 15¹³ 16¹⁷ 18¹⁰. 14. 19. 35 20²³ 25³⁴ 26²⁹. 53, Lk 22²⁹ 24⁴⁹.

[†] *Christology of Jesus*, pp. 102-104.

[‡] Mt 5¹⁶. 45. 48 6¹. 4. 6. 8. 14. 15. 18. 20. 32 7¹¹ 10²⁰. 29 23⁹, Lk 12³⁴.

to illustrate in detail the course of a man's self-will, sin, misery, repentance, and forgiveness by God,—though it does, this incidentally,—as to enforce the one great lesson of God's bountiful, forgiving love towards sinners, in contrast to the view of the Pharisees that men should be treated according to their deserts.* Note the circumstances under which the parable was spoken (vv.¹⁻²); Jesus' defence of Himself is that He is treating men as God treats them. If an earthly father yearns for his lost and wayward son, and welcomes him with the tenderest love, much more (Mt 7¹¹) will the Father in heaven. We must study the picture till the truth enters into our souls.

Note the language in v.²⁰—τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ, his own father; ἐτι δὲ αὐτοῦ μακρὰν ἀπέχοντος εἶδεν, suggesting that he had been watching for him; ἐστλαγχυσθε, was moved with compassion; δραμεῖν, running; κατεφιλήσε, kissed him tenderly.

3. In the description of the elder brother Jesus sets the Pharisee's conception of God over against His own representation of Him as a loving Father. The elder son had altogether misunderstood his relation to his father—"These many years do I serve thee" (v.²⁹); as Bengel says, *servus erat*. His whole point of view was a legal one of merit and desert. His harsh, exacting, unfeeling spirit seems altogether unnatural and unworthy beside the father's tender love. Yet his mistake is rebuked with tenderness—"Son (τέκνον, more affectionate than *υἱέ*), thou art ever with me, and all that is mine is thine."

V.

Read Mt 5⁴³⁻⁴⁸ 12⁵⁰.

1. Is God the Father of all men? It is certain that Jesus taught that God cares for good and bad alike (Mt 5⁴⁵), and yearns after the lost as a father for his lost son (Lk 15¹¹⁻³²).

With regard to the interpretation of Lk 15¹¹⁻³², see Introd. III. (c) (*last para.*). The Parable of the Prodigal indisputably teaches that God welcomes returning sinners as a father does his lost child; but it hardly of itself entitles us to say that God is the Father of all men, any more than other parables entitle us to say that He is a Shepherd (Lk 15³⁻⁷), or an Unjust Judge (Lk 18¹⁻⁸).

2. On the other hand, it is to be noted,—

(a) Jesus never spoke of "your Father" except when He was addressing His disciples.

See references in IV. 1, *note*. Mt 23¹⁻⁹ is not an exception; for the words in v.⁹ must be interpreted in the same sense as those in vv.⁸⁻¹⁰, which clearly apply only to disciples.

* Wendt, *Teaching of Jesus*, i. 197.

(b) Jesus clearly thought of the Fatherhood of God as a relationship revealed for the first time in His own life and experience, and made possible by Him for others (Mt 11²⁷, Study III.).

(c) In Mt 5⁴³⁻⁴⁸ (which should be carefully studied) Jesus exhorts His disciples to *become* (*γεννησθε*) the sons of God by increasingly manifesting His benevolent spirit. They become God's sons only by *partaking of His character*. So in Mt 12⁵⁰ it is those who do the will of His Father whom Jesus regards as His brethren.

3. Hence many eminent scholars (*e.g.* Wendt, Beyschlag, Stevens, Gilbert, etc.) adopt the conclusion that God *is* the Father of all men, cherishing towards all an unchanging love; but men *become* His sons only in proportion as they respond to His love and partake of His Spirit. This is possible because the relationship is an ethical one, and hence it may be maintained on the one side while it is broken on the other.

4. Probably all would admit that *in the sense intended* God is the Father of all men. But it may be said, on the other hand, as is done by Professor Matthews,* that to speak of God as the Father of those who are not His sons is a somewhat awkward and confused use of language; and, further, that if we use the term Fatherhood to describe God's relation to all men, we have no word left to express that new and wonderful relationship of mutual fellowship and love, which is the essential glory of the revelation of Jesus. To use the same name for two entirely different things is apt to lead to misunderstanding.

"That which is true of the divine paternity in the sense of Jesus is not true of the divine paternity in the larger sense. Promises made to those who in this deeper sense pray to the Father are not to be transferred to those who will not so pray, but prefer hatred to love, wickedness to purity. . . . A man full of selfishness and licentiousness cannot seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness in firm trust that a Heavenly Father will provide for his necessities. . . . As a result, therefore, to extend the usage of Jesus farther than the limits He Himself has set, is to contravene one of the fundamental distinctions of His teaching: the eternal distinction between goodness and badness." †

5. The important point is to grasp clearly and firmly the radical difference between the sense in which God may be called the Father of all men, and the sense in which He is the Father of those who through Jesus Christ have become His sons.

* *Social Teaching of Jesus*, pp. 62-68.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 67, 68.

VI.

Read Mt 6⁹, Lk 12²⁰, Mt 18^{34, 35} 10²⁸.

1. It would be a grave mistake to suppose that, when Jesus spoke of God as Father, He meant the name to suggest for a moment mere good-nature or easy-going indulgence. God was to Him the "Holy Father" (Jn 17^{11, 25}). So, in the model prayer which He taught His disciples (Mt 6⁹), the first petition after the invocation, "Our Father," is "Hallowed be Thy name," *i.e.* may Thy character revealed to men be acknowledged as holy.

2. Jesus further thought of God as holding in His hand the life and destiny of men (Lk 12²⁰), as punishing the unworthy (Mt 18^{34, 35}), and hence to be regarded with reverent fear (Mt 10²⁸, Lk 12^{4, 5}).

Mt 18³⁵, "Jesus is not afraid to bring the Father in in such a connection. Rather He is here again defining the Father by discriminating use of the name, as One who above all things abhors mercilessness" (Bruce).

Mt 10²⁸, Lk 12^{4, 5}. Bruce ("Expositor's Gk. Test.") and one or two others have thought that the one whom the disciples are here warned to fear must be the Devil. But the great majority of scholars agree that the words must refer to God. Cf. Plummer, "The change of construction points to this. It is no longer φοβήθητε ἀπὸ τούτου, but τούτου φοβήθητε, 'fear without trying to shun,' which is the usual construction of fearing God. Moreover, we are not in Scripture told to fear Satan, but to resist him courageously (Ja 47, 1 Pe 5⁹); τὸν θεὸν φοβήθητε τῷ διαβόλῳ ἀντιστῆτε is scriptural doctrine. Moreover, although the evil one tries to bring us to Gehenna, it is not he who has authority to send us thither" (Comm. on Luke, p. 319).

3. It may be well to go back over the Studies of this week and gather together what we have learned of Jesus' teaching about God.

VII.

See Introduction, V. 3, VI.

* 1. What truths about God did Jesus take for granted?

One member might bring a brief report on the passages referred to in I. 4.

* 2. Get clear the difference between the existing views about God and the new revelation of Him given by Jesus.

One member might be asked to prepare a brief statement of Jewish beliefs about God in the time of Jesus (Stevens, *Teaching of Jesus*, pp. 3-5)* or these pages of Professor Stevens' book might be read at the meeting.

* 3. Each member might state briefly in his own words his own conception of the significance of the new revelation.

4. Do you agree with the statement quoted from Professor Gilbert in II. 5?

* 5. Consider Mt 11²⁵⁻²⁷: see that all have apprehended the significance of the passage. Discuss the interpretation suggested in III. 4.

Avoid wandering from the present subject (see III. 5).

6. Is God the Father of all men?

Do not aim so much at arriving at a fixed and dogmatic conclusion on this difficult question, as at really understanding what is involved in the question, and what can be said on both sides.

7. What do you think about the interpretation of Mt 10²⁸?

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STUDIES VIII.-XXI.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

Its Place in Jesus' Teaching, VIII.

The Idea in the Old Testament, IX.

The Jewish Expectations with regard to it, X.

The Meaning of the Phrase in Jesus' Teaching, XI.-XIII.

The Nature of the Kingdom of God:

(a) *Spiritual*, XV.

(b) *Universal*, XVI.-XVII.

(c) *Present or Future?* XVIII.-XIX.

Review and Definitions, XX.

VIII.

Read (a) **Mt 4^{17, 23}, Mk 1^{14, 15}, Lk 4^{42, 43} 8¹⁻³, Mt 9³⁵, Lk 9¹¹.**

(b) **Mt 10⁵⁻⁷, Lk 9² 10¹⁻¹¹, Mt 24¹⁴.**

(c) **Mt 13^{24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47} 18²³ 20¹ 22² 25¹ etc.**

1. To-day's task is the seemingly profitless one of looking up references; but it will bring its reward. If time is limited, it will be sufficient to examine the references printed in bold type.

2. "If the average man were asked what Jesus spoke and preached about, he would answer without hesitation, 'The Gospel'; and in this he would not be wrong. But if he were further asked what the Gospel which Jesus taught was about, he would answer with equal confidence that it was about Salvation; and in this he would not be so right; because, although 'the Gospel of Salvation' is a phrase found in the writings of St. Paul, it never occurs in the records of the teaching of Jesus. What we find in place of it is 'the Gospel of the kingdom of God.'"^{*}

3. Note how "the kingdom of God" is (a) the burden of Jesus' preaching, (b) the message committed to the disciples, (c) the subject of most of Jesus' parables. The phrase occurs on the lips of Jesus over ninety times in the first three Gospels.

4. *Our time to-day will have been well spent, if by examining these passages we have thoroughly grasped the fact that "the kingdom of God" was the great subject about which Jesus preached and taught, and have been inspired to make an earnest and resolute effort to understand that which occupied so prominent a place in His thoughts.*

Note.—"The kingdom of heaven" (used only by Mt.) and "the kingdom of God" (Mk. Lk.) stand for the same thing, as may be seen by comparing Mt 13³¹, Mk 4^{30, 31}, Lk 13^{18, 19}; Mt 19¹⁴, Mk 10¹⁴, Lk 18¹⁶, and many other parallels. Among the Jews "heaven" was used to mean simply "God"; thus in the Mishna we find "the fear of Heaven" i.e. the fear of God, "the name of Heaven" i.e. the name of God.† Some think that Jesus spoke of the "kingdom of God," and Mt. writing for Jews adopted the popular substitute the "kingdom of heaven" (Wendt, etc.); others that Jesus used the latter phrase, and Mk. and Lk. writing for Greeks substituted the more intelligible expression "kingdom of God" (Beyschlag, Dalman, etc.). The question is not important, since both expressions mean the same thing; and Jesus may have used both, just as we find Him varying the expression by speaking sometimes of the kingdom of the Father (Mt 13³³ 26²⁹).

^{*} Stalker, *Christology of Jesus*, p. 136.

† Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, pp. 91, 92.

IX.

Read Ex 19³⁻⁶, 2 Sam 7¹²⁻¹⁷, Dn 2⁴⁴ 7^{13, 14}.

1. Read Introduction, II.

2. When Jesus spoke of the kingdom of God, He used language which was familiar to His hearers. The kingdom of God was something which they were expecting.* To understand Him we must learn what the ideas and expectations of His countrymen were.

3. Although the words "kingdom of God" do not occur in the OT, the idea they express is its central and dominating thought. We study to-day some key passages.

4. Ex 19³⁻⁶ describes the covenant established at Sinai between Jehovah and Israel, by which they were constituted His peculiar people, and the *Theocracy* was initiated. So vividly was this relationship realised, that the request for an earthly king in the time of Samuel (1 S 8⁴⁻⁹, cf. esp. v.7) was regarded as treason against Jehovah.

5. When the monarchy was granted, the king was looked upon as the earthly representative and vice-gereat of Jehovah. The great promise in 2 S 7^{13, 14} entered deeply into the heart of the nation. But the kings who sat upon David's throne proved unworthy, and at length the nation itself was carried into captivity. Nevertheless, even in the darkest days, hope was never quite extinguished. Nothing in Hebrew history is more surprising than this undying hope. The writings of the prophets abound with assurances that Jehovah will yet redeem His people, renew His covenant with them, place an ideal king upon David's throne, and establish a glorious and everlasting kingdom. (Cf. Dn 2⁴⁴ 7^{13, 14}, Jer 31^{31ff}, Zeph 3¹⁴⁻²⁰, Zec 14⁹, Is 11¹⁻⁹ etc.

6. It was the fulfilment of all these hopes that Jesus announced when He declared, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." We must try to realise what the announcement must have meant to a Jew.

* Cf. Mk 15⁴³, Lk 17²⁰, Ac 1⁶.

X.

Read Lk 1⁶⁷⁻⁷⁵, Mt 20^{20, 21}, Ac 1⁶, Mk 12^{14, 15}.

1. The suffering and degradation of the nation under foreign rule during the years preceding the advent of Jesus had had the effect of both intensifying and *secularising* the Jewish desire for the realisation of the kingdom of God. The *righteousness*, which the prophets had always associated with the kingdom, was little thought of by the majority of the people; and the hopes of the nation were rather directed towards political and material dominion.

2. Of this political element in the national hope we find clear traces in the NT. Even among the godly and pious, like Zacharias, deliverance from Gentile domination seemed a necessary condition of the true service of God (Lk 1^{71, 74}).

3. The disciples to the very end, in spite of Jesus' patient teaching, were unable to rid themselves of the thought of an earthly political kingdom in which they were to hold positions of authority (Mt 20^{20, 21}, Ac 1⁶). If this idea was so deeply rooted in the minds of the most spiritual members of the nation, we can imagine how strong a hold it must have had upon the people as a whole.

4. The cunning of the question of the Pharisees and Herodians about the tribute money (Mk 12^{14, 15}) lay just in this, that while a negative answer would have given them an excuse for accusing Jesus to Pilate, an affirmative answer would have put Him in direct antagonism to the strong patriotic and national aspirations of His own people.

Cf. *Ecce Homo*, p. 27: "The Jews laid information against Him before the Roman government as a dangerous character (Lk 23²); their real complaint against Him was precisely that He was *not* dangerous. Pilate executed Him on the ground that His kingdom was of this world; the Jews procured His execution precisely because it was not."

5. We must try by an exercise of the imagination to realise the force of these national aspirations of the Jews, and how much it must have meant for Jesus to go right in the teeth of them.

XI.

Read Mt 6^{10, 33}, Lk 17^{20, 21}.

1. We can understand what Jesus meant by "the kingdom of God" only by observing the way in which He used the phrase. We find that He used it in several senses, and that no one meaning can be made to suit all the passages.

2. In the first place, the expression seems sometimes to stand for the *rule, sovereignty, or reign* of God—"rule" rather than "kingdom."

This seems to have been the regular meaning of the phrase among the Jews. "No doubt can be entertained that both in the Old Testament and in Jewish literature, *Malkuth* (= βασιλεία = 'kingdom'), when applied to God, means always the 'kingly rule,' never the 'kingdom,'"; if it were meant to suggest the territory governed by Him." * Hence we are probably justified in regarding this meaning as the fundamental one, out of which all others spring.

3. The phrase seems to have this meaning of "rule" in Mt 6¹⁰, where the second clause may be regarded as expanding and interpreting the first. God's kingdom, *i.e.* His rule, is established in proportion as His will is done by men. So in Mt 6³³, what the disciples are to make their supreme aim is the realisation of God's righteous rule.

4. In Lk 17^{20, 21} Jesus plainly says that the kingdom of God is something inward, *i.e.* God's spiritual rule in the heart.

There is great difference of opinion as to whether the words ἐν τῷ μέσῳ should be translated "within you," or "among you," "in your midst." Many of the best scholars (Wendt, Beyschlag, Gilbert, etc.) adopt the latter, on the ground that Jesus in speaking to the Pharisees could not have said that the kingdom was within them. But the grammatical usage in Scripture is entirely in favour of the translation "within you" (Lk. elsewhere uses ἐν μέσῳ for "among"); and it is possible to interpret "you" in a general sense. So Sanday (Hastings' *BD*, ii. 620), Dalman, Godel, etc.; cf. Stevens, *The Teaching of Jesus*, p. 64, and the note on the passage in Plummer's commentary. Even if the words mean "in your midst," the kingdom which Jesus was thinking of must have been something inward and spiritual; for no one could say that any material or visible kingdom was then present.

"Observation" (ταρατηρίσας) means "close watching," *i.e.* the kingdom does not come in a visible manner.

5. The kingdom of God, then, on the lips of Jesus means, in the first place, the rule of God in the heart. How does the kingdom of God come in this sense? As far as our own hearts are concerned, does not its coming lie in our own hands?

* Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, p. 94; cf. pp. 96-101; Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus*, i. 269, 270.

XII.

Read Mt 5^{19, 20} 11¹¹ 13³⁶⁻⁴³. 47-50.

1. In the second place, the “kingdom of God” means the order of things in which the Divine rule is exercised. It stands for an *ideal state of society*. This meaning follows naturally from the preceding one; for a Divine rule implies persons who are ruled. The kingdom of God, beginning as the Divine rule in the heart, must in the end manifest itself outwardly in a regenerated society.

“In this as in other cases, spiritual forces take to themselves an outward form; they are enshrined in a vessel of clay, finer or coarser as the case may be, not only in men as individuals, but in men as a community or communities. The society then becomes at once a vehicle and instrument, of the forces by which it is animated, not a perfect vehicle or a perfect instrument,—a field of wheat mingled with tares, a net containing bad fish as well as good,—but analogous to those other visible institutions by which God accomplishes His gracious purposes among men.”*

2. The second meaning of the phrase is evidently the true one in such passages as Mt 5¹⁹ 11¹¹; for degrees of rank can exist only in a society. And in the Parables of the Tares (Mt 13³⁴⁻⁴³) and the Drag-net (Mt 13⁴⁷⁻⁵⁰), the kingdom appears to mean a society over which the Divine rule is exercised—a society in which that rule is outwardly acknowledged, but which contains many unworthy members who will ultimately be separated from it. This must also be the meaning of the phrase in the passages which describe the class of persons of whom the kingdom is to be composed (Mt 5²⁰, Mk 10¹⁴).

These passages will come up for study again, and are not meant to be studied to-day in detail; the one thought to be dwelt on is the idea of the kingdom which they illustrate. Read them carefully and consider exactly what “the Kingdom of God” must mean in them.

3. That Jesus thought of the kingdom as a society is clear from the fact that he contrasts it with the existing social order (Mt 20^{25, 26}, “The rulers of the Gentiles . . . not so shall it be among you”); and that He regards His disciples as united in a brotherhood (Mt 23⁸).

4. Let us dwell to-day upon the thought of the kingdom of God as the sovereignty of God realised in an ideal order of society. What difference would it make in the social condition of Great Britain and of the world as a whole, if the kingdom of God, in this sense, were to come? Does not the thought suggest “a social future

* Sanday in Hastings' *BD*, ii. 620.

which language itself is hardly rich enough to describe"?* To bring in such a future Jesus lived and died. Is there any higher or more worthy aim to which we can dedicate our lives?

XIII.

Read Mt 5^{3, 10} 13⁴⁴⁻⁴⁶.

1. Thirdly, the kingdom of God seems to stand sometimes for the *blessings and privileges* which belong to those under the Divine rule, for man's highest good, for the *summum bonum*. Thus in Mt 5^{3, 10} it is spoken of as the reward of those who possess a certain character.

2. More especially in the Parables of the Hid Treasure and the Merchantman (Mt 13⁴⁴⁻⁴⁶) the kingdom of heaven is spoken of as a good of priceless value. These parables are short, but it will take us long to exhaust their significance; let us read them again and again till they yield their secret. They let us see how Jesus regarded the kingdom. To Him it was something of altogether incomparable worth, something for which a man will gladly part with "all that he hath." To realise this in even a small measure will be a solid gain from to-day's Study.

In the one parable the discovery is made unexpectedly, in the other after prolonged search (note that the man is seeking *pearls*, he finds *one pearl*). Is not this difference paralleled in the experience of different men? In either case, when the discovery is made, the man "in his joy" surrenders all that he has to secure the prize. Jesus believed that when the vision of the kingdom of God once breaks upon a man, it will take such a hold of him that nothing will seem a sacrifice to bring about its realisation.

3. It is interesting to consider what relation this meaning of "the kingdom of God" bears to the first two (Studies XI., XII.). Is man's highest good found in living consciously and gladly under the rule of the Heavenly Father, and that not in a solitary experience, but in the sympathy and fellowship of a society, seeing the Divine rule effective without as well as within him?

"Jesus considered it certain that the chief end of mankind was to find their Salvation in the most intimate relation to God, and in full obedience to His will. He was further convinced that the purpose of God was directed principally to the bestowal of blessing on men, and not to the mere exaltation of the Divine Majesty over the world. Hence, in His view, the completed establishment of God as sovereign implied, for those who experienced it, absolute happiness." †

* Peabody, *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*, p. 100.

† Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, p. 136.

XIV.

See Introduction, V. 3, VI.

* 1. Is the kingdom of God rightly described as the most prominent subject in Jesus' teaching?

Two members might, if desired, be asked to report on (*a*) the number of separate occasions on which Jesus is reported as "preaching the kingdom of God," and the number on which He instructs His disciples to preach this message; (*b*) the number of recorded parables which have the Kingdom of God as their subject. The facts can be obtained from a Concordance; care must be used to avoid quoting parallel passages in the different Gospels as separate occasions.

2. Is there any difference between "the kingdom of heaven" and "the kingdom of God"? What would lead us to think that they stand for the same thing? What reasons have been given for the use of the double expression?

One member should be asked to briefly report on this, stating clearly the facts mentioned in VIII., *note*.

* 3. Try to arrive at a clear statement of (*a*) the place of the conception of the kingdom of God in the Old Testament (IX.); (*b*) the expectations of the Jews in our Lord's time with regard to the kingdom (X.).

This is the question most worth spending time upon in to-day's Study. It may seem difficult and yielding only indirect results. But it will help us in all our further study to understand the intellectual atmosphere in which Jesus taught. As regards (*a*), consider the passages referred to in IX. 5, and from them draw up a statement of what the hopes and expectations of the prophets were. One member might be asked to give special attention to this part of the question. As regards (*b*), one member should be appointed to bring a summary of Stevens, *The Teaching of Jesus*, pp. 7-12; or these pages might be read at the meeting, if time allowed. In any case, be sure to get the facts clear and distinct.

* 4. Consider the various meanings which the phrase "the kingdom of God" bears in Jesus' teaching, and their relation to one another. The different senses frequently glide into one another, but in the main they can be distinguished.

5. Discuss the interpretation of Lk 17^{20, 21} (see XI. 4). What can be said in favour of translating *ἐντὸς ὑμῶν* (*a*) "within you," (*b*) "among you"?

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XV.

Read Mt 12²²⁻²⁹ 4¹⁻¹¹, Mk 10¹³⁻¹⁶.

1. We have already seen (Study XI.) that, in opposition to the popular hope of a political and material kingdom, Jesus thought of the kingdom of God as something spiritual. But the matter is so important that it is worthy of further study.

2. Mt 12²²⁻²⁹. What did the triumph of the kingdom of God mean to Jesus (v.²⁸)? It was not against the Roman Empire that He had come to wage war, but against the kingdom of Satan (v.²⁶). What strong man had He come to supplant (v.²⁹)?

3. That the kingdom of God, as Jesus conceived it, was spiritual, is clear also from the character of its members. The qualifications which Jesus required of those who would enter it were not material wealth, power, or influence, but childlike faith and simplicity (Mk 10¹³⁻¹⁶, cf. Mt 18¹⁻⁴); and in actual practice He was content to trust the fortunes of the kingdom to a little band of humble, ignorant, unknown disciples.

4. Thus Jesus and His contemporaries came into sharp collision in their views of the nature of the kingdom of God (Study X.). And it is in the light of this contradiction and opposition that we must seek to understand the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness (Mt 4¹⁻¹¹). He had to decide at the beginning of His career as Messiah, whether He would conform in any degree to the popular expectations (cf. v.⁸), and use the miraculous powers which had been given Him to further His own ends (vv.^{3, 6}); or whether He would follow what He believed to be the will of God, and put His whole trust and confidence in Him (vv.^{4, 7, 10}). He chose the latter with all its consequences.

"This refusal (*i.e.* to yield to Satan's suggestions) was a serious matter. Jesus thereby renounced all power founded upon material means and social institutions. He broke with the Messianic Jewish ideal under the received form. He confined Himself, in accomplishing the conquest of the world, to spiritual action exerted upon souls. . . . He condemned Himself to struggle, unaided by human power, with an adversary having all human powers. . . . Death inevitably awaited Him in this path. But He unhesitatingly accepted all this, that He might remain faithful to God, from whom alone He determined to receive everything." *

5. It is worth while reflecting how infinitely greater, more difficult, and more heroic than the establishment of any earthly

* Godef, *Commentary on St. Luke's Gospel*, i. 216.

kingdom was this task which Jesus set Himself,—to establish a kingdom founded not on force, but on the willing assent of those whose hearts had been won by love.

“What other man has had the courage or elevation of mind to say, ‘I will build up a state by the mere force of my will, without help from the kings of the world, without taking advantage of any of the secondary causes which unite men together,—unity of interest or of speech, or blood-relationship. I will make laws for my state which shall never be repealed, and I will defy all the powers of destruction that are at work in the world to destroy what I build’?”³

XVI.

Read Mt 5^{13, 14} 13³⁸ 28¹⁶⁻²⁰, Lk 24⁴⁷.

1. A second respect in which Jesus' view of the kingdom differed from that of His countrymen was, that they thought of the kingdom as national, He thought of it as *universal*. His disciples were to be the salt of the *earth*, the light of the *world* (Mt 5^{13, 14}); the field in which He sowed His good seed was the *world* (Mt 13³⁸, cf. 24¹⁴ 26¹³). Think of the boldness and magnificence of this outlook.

2. This universality of the kingdom is a direct and necessary consequence of its spirituality. If the coming of the kingdom consists in the overcoming of evil by good (Mt 12²²⁻²⁹; Study XV.), in the return of wandering sons to their Father in heaven (Lk 15¹¹⁻²⁴; Study IV.), then it must be as universal as man and as sin. A material kingdom might be local and national, but not the spiritual kingdom of which Jesus was thinking.

3. Hence we are not surprised to find that Jesus' last commission to His disciples was to go to all nations (Mt 28¹⁶⁻²⁰, Lk 24⁴⁷). The only thing to be done with these great sayings is to dwell on them, until we catch something of the grandeur of their spirit. How far, in this matter, are we in sympathy with the mind of Christ?

XVII.

Read Mt 15²¹⁻²⁸ 10^{5, 6} 8⁵⁻¹³ 21⁴³.

1. But if Jesus' aim was really universal, what are we to make of such passages as Mt 15²⁴ 10^{5, 6}? Can you think of any reasons why, even if Jesus aimed at setting up a universal kingdom, it

³ *Eccle Homo*, p. 39.

should yet have been best that His personal ministry should be confined to His own people?

"Assuming that the kingdom was destined to universality, it might still be the wisest method for founding a universal spiritual monarchy to begin by securing a footing within the boundaries of the elect people; and that could be done only by one who devoted his whole mind to it, determined not to be turned aside by outside opportunities, however tempting, or by random sympathies, however keen, with sin and misery beyond the Jewish pale. The utterance in question only shows the thoroughly disciplined spirit of Jesus in abiding at His own appointed post."^{*}

2. Further, it is to be noted that Jesus *granted* the request of the Syrophenician woman, as He did that of the Roman centurion (Mt 8⁵⁻¹³), and of the Samaritan leper (Lk 17¹¹⁻¹⁹).

In the narrative Mt 8⁵⁻¹³, note (1) that it is *faith* not *birth* that gains the blessing (v.¹⁰);—once admit that as a principle, and you have universalism; (2) the definite prophecy in v.¹¹; it is not hard to imagine the thrill of emotion which this vision must have awakened in the heart of Jesus, a vision which He knew He would not see realised in His own lifetime.

3. There are, besides, many sayings of Jesus, such as Mt 21⁴³, which indicate that He contemplated the privileges which the Jews enjoyed passing into the hands of others.†

XVIII.

Read Mt 11¹²⁻¹⁶ 21^{31, 32}, Lk 10^{23, 24}.

1. A further question is, whether Jesus thought of the kingdom as present or future. Many passages seem to indicate that He thought of the kingdom as having already come. In Mt 11¹²⁻¹⁴ He identifies John the Baptist with Elijah, who was to usher in the kingdom (v.¹⁴),‡ and announces that since his time it has been forcibly taken possession of.

V.¹² is difficult; but the words seem to mean that there was a strong, earnest movement towards the kingdom (cf. "multitudes," v.⁷, and the parallel passage in Lk 16¹⁶, *πᾶς εἰς αὐτὴν βιάζεται*, "Every man forceth his way into it"), and that this movement had been initiated by John (cf. Mt 3¹⁻²). Conscious though He was of its faults and insincerities (cf. Jn. 2^{24, 25}), Jesus saw in the new movement, which was stirring the country to its depths, a real impulse towards the kingdom of God and a powerful testimony to the work of John. So in v.¹³ the emphasis is on *promised*. The others had only foretold the coming of the kingdom; John said, "It is *here*."

2. In Mt 21^{31, 32} Jesus talks of sinful men and women as entering the kingdom then and there; cf. Mt 23¹³.

* Bruce, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 57.

† Cf. Mt 22¹⁻¹⁰, Lk 14¹⁵⁻²⁴ 4²³⁻²⁹, Mt 11²⁰⁻²⁴.

‡ Cf. Mk 9¹¹⁻¹³, Mat 23³⁵.

3. Other passages which we have already studied unmistakably indicate that Jesus regarded the kingdom as present, *e.g.* Lk 17^{20, 21}, Mt 12²⁸ etc. Cf., too, the incident with which St. Luke begins his history of Jesus' ministry (Lk 4¹⁶⁻²¹), when Jesus, after reading the Messianic prophecy from the Scriptures, astonished His hearers with the startling announcement, "To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears!"

4. Hence Jesus is able to congratulate His disciples that their eyes had seen what the OT saints had waited for in hope (Lk 10^{23, 24}).

Observe the context in Lk. The words are uttered in connection with the overthrow of the kingdom of Satan (10^{17, 18}) and the revelation by Jesus of the Father (10²²). In Mt 13^{16, 17} the words occur in a different connection.

5. If Jesus thought of the kingdom as something spiritual (XV.), the rule of God in the heart (XI.), He must have been conscious that it had been begun to be set up when in His own life the reign of God had been perfectly acknowledged. In so far it had already come; and it would grow in proportion as others were led through His teaching to acknowledge that rule.

"Jesus possessed, in His personal piety, from the first too keen a consciousness of an already existing state of gracious fellowship with His Father in heaven, too rich an experience of the possession of Divine power and of guidance by the Fatherly love of God, and too firm confidence in the accessibility of this blessed state to all other men, to lead Him to believe or to proclaim the kingdom of God to be a merely future and heavenly one, and not rather as being in essence already in course of realisation here upon earth."^{*}

6. The kingdom of God, then, is here,—a treasure to be found *now* (Mt 13⁴⁴⁻⁴⁶), an ideal to be lived for *now* (Mt 6³³).

XIX.

Read Mt 25³⁴ 13³⁹⁻⁴³, Lk 13^{28, 29}, Mk 14²⁵ 10¹⁵.

1. In other passages Jesus no less clearly regards the kingdom as something future. In Mt 25³⁴ it is at the final judgment that the righteous are to inherit the kingdom. Lk 13^{28, 29} (cf. Mt 8^{11, 12}) can refer (cf. v. 25-27) only to the final consummation of the kingdom and separation of good and evil. The parable of the Tares (Mt 13³⁹⁻⁴³) describes a final establishment of the kingdom at the end of the world. Mk 14²⁵ is a mysterious saying; but it seems clearly to refer to the life after death.†

2. Can these passages be reconciled with those we studied yesterday? If we regard the kingdom of God as meaning funda-

* Wendt, *Teaching of Jesus*, i. 400.

† So also passages like Mk 9⁴⁷, Mt 7²¹ (cf. v. 22) refer to an entrance into the consummated heavenly kingdom.

mentally the rule of God, we can see how, on the one hand, it was really set up at the coming of Jesus (Study XIX. 5); while, on the other, its perfect and complete realisation is yet future. "We see *not yet* all things subjected to Him" (Heb 2⁸).

The nature of the growth and future development of the kingdom of God will be considered in later Studies.

3. In Mk 10¹⁵ we seem to have both ideas side by side in the same verse, showing how naturally they could co-exist in the mind of Jesus.

"The kingdom is so far present that a man may receive it; it is still future in so far as we are yet to be received into it, and the former is the condition of the latter."*

4. This thought of the final and complete establishment of the kingdom which is yet to come, is one from which we may draw hope and encouragement.

"As surely as sowing and growth finally result in harvest and completeness, so surely will the kingdom, founded by Jesus in weakness and secrecy, finally develop into the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, into that perfect state where God will be all in all."†

XX.

REVIEW (Read Mt 4²³).

1. What does the kingdom of God mean to you personally? What does it suggest to you of good, of ideal, of inspiration?

2. In the light of the passages which have been studied during the past two weeks, examine and consider the adequacy of the following definitions of the kingdom of God:—

(a) "The reign of Divine love exercised by God in His grace over human hearts believing in His love, and constrained thereby to yield Him grateful affection and devoted service" (Bruce, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 46).

(b) "The idea of a Divine dispensation under which God would bestow His full salvation upon a society of men, who, on their part, should fulfil His will in true righteousness" (Wendt, *The Teaching of Jesus*, i. 175).

(c) "An ideal (though progressively approximated) social order in which the relation of men to God is that of sons, and (therefore)

* Beyschlag, *NT Theology*, i. 51.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 53, 54.

to each other, that of brothers" (Matthews, *The Social Teaching of Jesus*, p. 54).

(d) "The rule of God, which was manifested in and through Christ; is apparent in the Church; gradually develops amidst hindrances; is triumphant at the second coming of Christ; and finally perfected in the world to come" (Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus*, i. 270).

Which of these definitions do you prefer? Or do you feel inclined to say with Professor Stevens, "Jesus' large, free use of the term, according to which now one, now another aspect of the kingdom is dwelt upon, renders it impossible to define the kingdom adequately in any single formula; it is difficult to define, not because it means nothing in particular, but because it means so much" (*NT Theology*, p. 40; cf. his *Teaching of Jesus*, p. 68)?

N.B.—These last words should be kept in mind, if difficulty is felt—as it may well be—in reconciling certain sayings of Jesus regarding the kingdom with others, or relating all the sayings in a consistent whole.

XXI.

See Introduction, V. 3, VI.

* 1. State briefly and clearly the evidence for the fact that Jesus' conception of the kingdom of God was spiritual (X., XI., XV.).

2. Consider the temptation of Jesus in the light of the conflict between His view of the kingdom and that of His countrymen (XV. 4; cf. Stevens, *Teaching of Jesus*, p. 12). What was the force of each of the Satanic suggestions, and the meaning of Jesus' reply?

* 3. What proof is there that Jesus meant the kingdom to be universal? What is the bearing of this on the question of Foreign Missions? Consider the value of the indirect argument suggested in XVI. 2.

4. How would you explain Mt 15²¹⁻²⁸ 10^{5, 6}?

* 5. Is it certain that Jesus spoke of the kingdom sometimes as present and sometimes as future? How can the difference be reconciled?

* 6. Go through the definitions of the kingdom of God given in Study XX. 2, examining their truth and adequacy.

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STUDIES XXII.-XXXV.

THE BLESSINGS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

The Value of Man, XXII.

Man's True Life, XXIII.-XXIV.

The Taint in Man's Life, XXV.

The Recovery of Man's True Life, XXVI.

Eternal Life, XXVII.

The Forgiveness of Sins, XXIX.-XXX.

The Heavenly Father's Care, XXXI.-XXXII.

Prayer, XXXIII.-XXXIV.

In these Studies we wish to enquire more fully what was the great good which Jesus declared and brought to men. In making this enquiry, we must bear well in mind what we have already discovered to be His teaching about God and about the Kingdom. His view of the blessings which He offered to bestow on men is very closely dependent on His thought about these two great subjects.

XXII.

Read Mt 6²⁶ 10²⁹⁻³¹ 12¹² 18¹⁰⁻¹⁴.

1. Jesus' view of the blessings to be bestowed upon man in the kingdom of God must depend upon the view which He held as to the nature of man. Hence we have first to enquire what this was.

2. We learn from Mt 6²⁶ 10²⁹⁻³¹ 12¹² that man is of very great value in the sight of God. Observe how frequently Jesus gives utterance to the thought of man's superiority to the lower animals.

10^{29, 30}. The meanest creature does not pass out of existence without your Father's observation; how much more will He care for *you*, whose value is so much greater? The extent of that value is indicated by the fact that your hairs, which taken altogether are of little value and can be lost without any serious harm, are all numbered (*τάραται*, all without exception, *ἡριθμῶμεναι*, Perf. Part.—counted once for all so that not one can go missing unobserved).

3. That man should have so high a value in the sight of God is what we should expect if, as we have already learnt, he has the capacity for becoming God's son. Even if Jesus had not explicitly told us, we might have been sure that that fact would give him a dignity and value infinitely greater than that of the brutes. Jesus sets His seal on the teaching of Gn 1²⁷.

Note that in Mt 6²⁶ 10²⁹ Jesus says "*your* Father," not "*their* Father"; God is not the Father of the birds.

4. Mt 18¹⁰⁻¹⁴ teaches us that God sets this high value not only upon those who possess great and godlike qualities, but upon all, even the most helpless,—upon the "little ones," whom men are apt to "despise," and upon those who go astray like foolish sheep. Each individual man has an infinite worth in the eyes of God. Observe how here, as in the preceding passages, this assurance of the worth of man is directly connected with the Fatherly love of God—"My Father" (v.¹⁰), "your Father" (v.¹⁴—or "My Father," RV Marg.).

In v.¹⁰ Jesus expresses the Fatherly care of God by saying that the guardian angels of the "little ones" have free and constant access to the presence of God. The belief in guardian angels was current among the Jews. The beauty of the truth Jesus wishes to teach remains the same whether we understand His words literally or metaphorically.

5. The longest meditation will not exhaust the meaning and far-reaching significance of these words of Jesus which we have studied to-day.

XXIII.

Read Lk 12¹³⁻²¹, Mt 5³⁻¹² 43. 4.

1. Man's infinite value lies in the fact that he possesses a free, conscious, personal life of his own.

2. In Lk 12¹⁵ Jesus tells us that a man's real life does not consist in what he *has*. His hold on earthly goods is slight, and he may be summoned at any moment to relinquish them. The only true wealth is that which is "toward God" (v.²¹).

V.¹⁵, πάσης πλεονεξίας = "every form of covetousness," οὐκ ἐν τῷ περισσεύειν κ.τ.λ. = "not in the fact that a man has abundance is it the case that his life is the outcome of his possessions," *i.e.* it does not follow, because a man has abundance, that his life consists in wealth (Plummer). His riches will neither avail to prolong his earthly life, nor stand him in any stead in the life beyond death. V.¹⁶, there is no hint that the wealth was unjustly acquired. V.²¹, "rich toward God" may mean either "rich in spiritual goods" or "rich for God's glory," *i.e.* using his wealth for God's glory.

3. In Mt 5³⁻¹² Jesus teaches positively that man's true life and blessedness consist in what he *is*. Blessedness depends not on circumstances, but on *character*. This is an entire reversal of men's ordinary judgments, which estimate a man's good or bad fortune by his outward circumstances.

The Beatitudes are not intended to be studied to-day in detail; a whole Study will be devoted to them later. The one thought to be reflected upon at present is Jesus' view of man's true blessedness as being found in character.

4. This conviction of Jesus as to wherein man's true life consists, was put to the test in His temptation in the wilderness (Mt 4³⁻⁴).

"Jesus has nothing to say against bread-making; in another place He feeds a great multitude. When, however, it is a question of the supreme need of life, He knows that there are necessities more profound than hunger. The fundamental craving of human life, He well knows,—and many a human being, though oppressed by poverty and hunger, still feels the deeper need,—is for capacity, inspiration, regeneration, personality, power." *

* Penbody, *Social Teaching of Jesus*, pp. 114, 115.

XXIV.

Read Mk 8³⁴⁻³⁸ (Mt 16²⁴⁻²⁷, Lk 9²³⁻²⁶).

1. The true nature and immense value of man's life are plainly declared in the great passage, Mk 8³⁴⁻³⁸. Jesus summons men to the self-renunciation involved in following Him (v.³⁴), even to the complete surrender of their natural life, in order that they may preserve and develop their true spiritual life (v.³⁵), which has an infinite value and worth (vv.³⁶⁻³⁷).

2. Jesus does not hesitate to invite men to a career of self-sacrifice (v.³⁴), because He knows that in such a path they will find their true and highest life (v.³⁵). In this verse (³⁵) two views of life are contrasted,—that which looks upon life as something to be guarded, cherished, and gratified; and that which looks upon it as something to be spent in continual self-surrender to the highest ideals. Jesus declares that the latter view is the true one. Raymond Lull had grasped this teaching when he wrote, "He who loves not *lives* not, and he who lives by the Life can never die." Nothing can be more important for a man than to decide what view he will take of life.

↓↕↗ is thus used in a double sense, meaning in the first half of each antithesis man's earthly natural life, and in the second half higher, eternal, spiritual life.

3. This true life of man is something of infinite value (v.³⁶). Anything that a man can *get*—even if it be the whole world, how much less the trifles that most men pursue—is of no worth or profit to him compared with his own life, *his own self* (ἐαυτὸν δὲ ἀπολέσας ἢ ζημιωθείς, Lk 9²⁵).

"This is one of the chief texts containing Christ's doctrine of the absolute worth of man as a moral subject. For the man who grasps it, it is easy to be a hero and face any experience. To Jesus Christ it was a self-evident truth" (Bruce).

4. The loss of this true life is an irreparable one; for there is *nothing* which can compensate a man for the loss or injury of his own soul, his own self, his own personality. In v.³⁸, "the final 'for' (γάρ) carries us on to the issue of human life, and places the whole struggle between self-seeking and self-sacrifice in the light of the eternal order" (Swete).

5. The contrast between man's mere earthly life and his true eternal life is again emphasised in Mt 10²⁸, Mk 9⁴³⁻⁴⁸ etc.

XXV.

Read Mk 7²⁰⁻²³ 21⁵⁻¹⁷, Lk 15¹⁻¹⁰.

1. While Jesus looked on man as a being of such immeasurable worth, He at the same time regarded his nature as infected with a dreadful taint. As a proof of this we may take the terrible catalogue of the products of the human heart in Mk 7²⁰⁻²³.

The "heart" in the Bible is "the seat of man's collective energies, the focus of the personal life."

2. We see also from Mk 2¹⁵⁻¹⁷ that Jesus regarded men as morally diseased and in need of healing, which it was the mission of His life to bring to them.

Who are the "whole" (*οἱ ἰσχυροί*) and the "righteous" (*δικαίους*)? The reference is no doubt to the Pharisees, whom Jesus took at their own valuation (cf. Lk 18⁹⁻¹¹), without necessarily acknowledging it as correct.

3. But this disease and taint with which man's nature is infected in no way lessens his value in the eyes of God. It rather serves to further illustrate how great that value is; for it makes him the object of God's infinite compassion and redeeming love. In Lk 15² objection is taken to Jesus' intercourse with the sinful. He defends Himself on the ground that He is acting towards them as God would act; and He exhibits the Divine love in the three exquisite parables that follow.

In the first (vv. 3-7), the emphasis is on God's pity and compassion; nothing could be more helpless or pitiable than a lost sheep, and the shepherd in love goes to its aid, though it is only one among a hundred. The shepherd's love is shown by (1) the persistence of the search ("until he find it"), (2) the tenderness of his treatment (v. 5), and (3) his joy at finding it (v. 6). In the second parable (vv. 8-10) the thought is rather the value of the sinner to God; it is not pity but her own loss that makes the woman seek for the coin (hence the proportion is now not 1 in 100, but 1 in 10, a more serious loss). The third parable we have already studied (IV.).

"By the interest which He took in the depraved, Jesus still further accentuated His doctrine as to the value of human nature. 'Honest poverty' has a certain worth, appreciable even by those who set their hearts on possessions. But what shall be said of humanity stripped not only of outward goods, but even of character? That it is still humanity, replied the "friend of publicans and sinners," with latent spiritual powers capable of development, with the solemn responsibilities of moral agents, with features of the Divine image not yet wholly effaced and that may be restored." *

4. Pascal says, "The traits of greatness and misery in man are so clear, that it is absolutely necessary that the true religion should

* Bruce, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 130.

teach us that there is in him some great principle of greatness, and at the same time some great principle of misery." No one ever saw and taught both these principles in human nature so clearly as Jesus.

XXVI.

Read Lk 4¹⁶⁻²² 199. 10.

1. Bearing in mind Jesus' view of man's true life, we should expect to find that He held the blessings of the kingdom to consist, not in any outward prosperity or glory of an earthly kind, such as many Jews looked for, but in *the recovery of man from the misery in which he is involved to the higher life of which he is capable*. We have already studied several passages which show that this was so, e.g. Lk 15 (IV., XXV.), Mt 12²²⁻²⁹ (XV.) etc.

2. The beautiful incident in the synagogue at Nazareth (Lk 4¹⁶⁻²²), which St. Luke places in the forefront of his account of Jesus' public ministry as prefiguring and typifying the whole, clearly and forcibly shows us what Jesus considered were the blessings which it was His mission to convey to men.

V.17. It is quite uncertain whether there were regular fixed "Lessons" from the prophets in our Lord's time. "He found the place"—"by choice, or in due course, uncertain which; it does not greatly matter, the choice would be characteristic, the order of the day providential as giving Jesus just the text He would delight to speak from" (Bruce). That Jesus regarded this passage as prophetic of His ministry we know from Lk 7²².

Vv.18.19 are a somewhat free quotation from the Septuagint version of Is 61.2. Each clause deserves attention. That Jesus made use of the words primarily in a spiritual sense is certain when we remember His view of man's true life. The real, sad, serious blindness, captivity, etc., was, in His eyes, that caused by sin (cf. Mk 2¹⁷ 23.5). "The acceptable year of the Lord" is the age of the Messiah.

In v.22 Luke uses, for the first time in connection with the Christian revelation, a word which has since come to be very intimately associated with it as expressing the Divine favour and condescension towards the undeserving—*grace*.

3. Lk 19¹⁰. "No recorded word of Jesus is more characteristic, more credibly authentic, and more significant as an index of His own conception of His mission than this."*

4. We may conclude, then, that the first great blessing of the kingdom was, in Jesus' mind, the *salvation* of the *lost*, the recovery of man to his true life as a son of God.

* Bruce, *Apologetics*, p. 48.

XXVII.

Read Mk 10²⁸⁻³⁰ 12¹⁸⁻²⁷.

1. Man's true spiritual life is a thing of such immense importance and worth because it has in it the promise and possibility of eternity. In Mk 10³⁰ Jesus promises His followers, as the reward of discipleship, *eternal life*.*

In this verse Jesus also promises His disciples blessings in this life; but He significantly adds that they will be "with persecutions." The blessings promised must be interpreted spiritually; for Jesus never led His disciples to expect worldly prosperity.† The "hundredfold" refers to their superiority not so much in number as in *quality*,—spiritual friendships and affections that will last for ever (cf. Mt 12⁵⁰), bountiful provision by a Heavenly Father (Mt 6^{31, 32}).

2. In Mk 12¹⁸⁻²⁷ (Mt 22²³⁻³³, Lk 20²⁷⁻³⁹) we have Jesus' great and profound argument for the reality of the future life.

The Sadducees, finding an occasion in the very materialistic views which many of the Pharisees held with regard to the future state, sought to demonstrate its incredibility by a ludicrous presentation of the difficulties it would create. Jesus with unerring penetration brings to light the twofold error which underlies their objection. In the first place, they limit the *power of God*, who is able to create altogether new forms of life (v. 29). The future state will not be a mere prolongation of the earthly life of sense. By this argument Jesus shows the *possibility* of the Resurrection.

The Sadducees' second error lay in their ignorance of God's revelation of Himself recorded in Scripture, from which they might have learned the *certainly* of the Resurrection (v. 26). Jesus refers to a particular passage from the Law, the part of the Bible to which the Jews attached the highest authority, and in which the doctrine of immortality was least clearly taught (cf. *even Moses*, Lk 20³⁷); but the real argument is much wider, and the appeal is to revelation as a whole and, what underlies revelation, the relation of God to men‡ (no special emphasis can be placed on the word "*am*," to which there is nothing corresponding in either the Hebrew or the Greek). The argument is that if a man possesses *God*, he must possess Him eternally. When God declared that He was the God of Abraham, He could not have meant that He was so only during his brief earthly life; He could give Himself only to those whom He meant to live and enjoy Him for ever. Jesus was certain of this fact from His own personal experience. He knew His own relation to God to be an indissoluble one. As Wendt says, "He had the certainty that fellowship with God is a life-bringing relation."§ And this certainty enabled Him to see the truth foreshadowed in God's declared relation to the patriarchs.

Some consider that this argument proves only the immortality of the *soul*. But "the resurrection of the body follows, when it is understood that it is a *true part of human nature*" (Swete). This is the OT view, and Jesus, "in harmony with the OT conception of man and of life, does not think of a purely incorporeal existence as real life in man's case."||

* Cf. Mt 25⁴⁶, Mk 9^{43, 45}, Lk 16⁹.

† Cf. e.g. Mt 5^{10, 12} 10^{17, 22, 34} 16^{24, 249}, Lk 9^{20, 21} etc.

‡ Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus*, ii. 402.

§ *Teaching of Jesus*, i. 223.

|| Salmon, *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 336 (3rd ed.).

3. Our study this week has shown us how Jesus' view of the blessings of the kingdom is based on His view of the nature and destiny of man. There can be no greater blessing than to enter into that high eternal life of fellowship with God of which men are capable.

XXVIII.

See Introduction, V. 3, VI.

* 1. What did Jesus teach about the dignity and value of man? *Why* has man this value? (XXII.-XXIII.).

It may be found that this teaching does not afford very much opportunity for discussion. It is fairly easy to understand, and does not need to be discussed so much as reflected upon until its significance is realised. Still the principal passages might be recalled, and their teaching clearly summarised; each member might be asked to state in his own words what has especially struck him.

* 2. Discuss Mk 8³⁴⁻³⁸. Go through the passage word by word, and get clear the sequence of thought, particularly the force of "for" at the beginning of vv. 35, 36, 37, 38.

One member might be commissioned to make this passage a matter of special study.

3. In what light did Jesus regard the sinfulness of human nature?

* 4. What are the grounds on which the statement in XXVI. 4 can be justified? How has it been led up to by Studies XXII.-XXV.?

5. What do you consider to be the blessings that Jesus promises in Mk 10³⁰?

* 6. What is Jesus' great argument for eternal life in Mk 12¹⁸⁻²⁷? What is its force to you personally?

This last question is perhaps the one most worth spending time on to-day. The most helpful way might be to first go through the matter in XXVII. 2, sentence by sentence, ascertaining how far each statement is understood and approved by the members of the Circle. Then each member might be invited to state how far the argument seems to him convincing and final.

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XXIX.

Read Mk 21-12 328-30, Lk 114 2447.

1. Since the blessings of the kingdom are offered to men who are sinners, the initial blessing is *the forgiveness of their sins*.

2. When the palsied man was brought to Him (Mk 21¹²), Jesus dealt first with what He felt to be the more serious disease,—that of the soul. Let us try to understand the deep meaning of the beautiful words in v.⁵,—“*Son, thy sins are forgiven.*” Truly it was a message of “good cheer” (Mt 9²).

Do not spend time to-day considering, either what this incident suggests as to the extraordinary claims of Jesus (v.¹⁰), or the relation of Christ's death to the forgiveness of sins; both these points will be considered later.

3. Jesus taught His disciples to pray for the forgiveness of their sins (Lk 11⁴), and made this blessing a part of the Gospel message to be carried to the world (Lk 24⁴⁷).

4. In Mk 3²⁸⁻³⁰ Jesus teaches that all kinds of sin which men commit may be forgiven them, even blasphemies against His own person and the fiercest opposition to His cause (Mt 12³², cf. Lk 23³⁴). There is but one sin which cannot find forgiveness, the sin against the Holy Spirit.

To understand what this is we must observe the context. The Scribes had ascribed Jesus' works of mercy to Beelzebub (Mk 3²²⁻³⁰); that is to say, their moral nature was so hopelessly perverted that they failed to recognise goodness when they saw it, and identified it with the impersonation of evil. They had reached the state of those described in Is 5²⁰, who “call evil good, and good evil.” Their opposition to the claims of Jesus might have been due to deep-seated prejudice and mistaken notions (cf. Study X.), but in this accusation of theirs they were in danger of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, against holiness and goodness itself, deliberately rejecting it and declaring it to be evil. Such a state is a sin which is necessarily “eternal” in its consequences, “because it springs from fixed persistent hatred of goodness.”* Jesus does not say that His opponents have actually reached this state; He only holds it out as a fearful warning. When a man reaches the stage of deliberately identifying his will with evil, his *character becomes fixed*, and hence his sin “eternal.” But no man who has the faintest desire to repent and be better has reached this stage or is beyond the pale of forgiveness.

* Stevens, *NT Theology*, p. 102.

XXX.

Read Lk 7³⁶⁻⁵⁰.

In this story we have an example of the love which forgiveness awakens in the forgiven, and Jesus' teaching about the relation of forgiveness and love.

We must picture the scene, and Simon's not altogether unnatural misunderstanding of the woman's action (v. 39). But Jesus understands and brings to light the motive which explains her unusual conduct. It is the overmastering love of one who has been deeply forgiven.

Two points require consideration. (1) Is love the *ground* or the *result* of forgiveness? Many, especially Roman Catholic commentators, have interpreted v. 47 as meaning, "For this reason her sins are forgiven, *because* she loved much." But this is inconsistent with (a) the parable, (b) the second half of v. 47, (c) v. 50, where Jesus says, "Thy *faith* hath saved thee." Hence we must interpret the words as meaning, "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; *for* (= and this is the proof) she loved much," *i.e.* the great love she has shown proves that she has had many sins forgiven. "For" may introduce either the *cause* or the *proof*, *e.g.* "It is light, for (= the *cause*) the sun is risen," or "The sun is risen, for (= the *proof*) it is light" (Godet).

(2) Is it, then, an advantage to have sinned much? As a matter of fact it is often those who have gone furthest wrong who become most passionate in their enthusiasm for Christ. The reason for this is partly that it is more natural for them to have a painful sense of their moral shortcoming, partly that such natures are generally endowed with powerful passions, which, while leading them at first strongly in one direction, will, when transformed, lead them equally strongly in the other.* Dr. Bruce quotes from Bunyan's *The Jerusalem Sinner Saved*: "Alas! Christ has but little thanks for the saving of little sinners. He gets not water for His feet, by His saving of such sinners. There are abundance of dry-eyed Christians in the world, and abundance of dry-eyed duties too: duties that were never wetted with the tears of contrition and repentance, nor even sweetened with the great sinner's box of ointment. . . . Wherefore His way is oftentimes to step out of the way, to Jericho, to Samaria, to the country of the Gadarenes, to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and also to Mount Calvary, that He may lay hold of such kind of sinners as will love Him to His liking."†

At the same time, we must remember the remark of Augustine, "O Pharisee, thou lovest little, because thou supposest that little hath been forgiven thee; not because little is forgiven, but because thou thinkest that which is forgiven to be but little." Our love depends on *our estimate* of what has been forgiven.

* Bruce, *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, pp. 253, 254.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 251, 252.

XXXI.

Read Mt 11²⁸⁻³⁰, Lk 10¹⁷⁻²⁰.

1. Jesus promised to His followers not only a future life of blessedness (XXVII.), but also in this present earthly life complete *peace, restfulness, and immunity from real harm*. This follows from the care of their Heavenly Father (II. 3 (b), 4, 5; XXII. 2, 3).

2. We have already studied the verses which precede Mt 11²⁸⁻³⁰, and seen how wonderfully they describe Jesus' perfect trust and confidence in His Father (see III. 4). So rich is His experience, that Jesus feels that He can invite the whole weary world to come and share His *rest*.

The words "all ye that labour and are heavy laden" may be taken in the widest sense, including all burdened by legal ordinances (Mt 23), all weary in their search for the highest good, and all weighed down by the circumstances, disappointments, and trials of this earthly life. "Take My yoke," *i.e.* become My disciples. "For I am meek, etc."—the secret of the experience of v.27 (cf. Is 57¹⁵). "For My yoke is easy,"—hard in one sense (Mt 5²⁰), but easy when we know the Father.

3. In Lk 10²⁰ Jesus bids His disciples find a profound and unchangeable source of joy in the fact that their names are written in heaven, *i.e.* that they "are known to God and are kept in remembrance by Him ('in heaven' stands for 'with God'),"* and hence are safe in their Father's care from all possibility of real harm (v.19).

"The very greatest achievements, nay the very works which are done in the strength of this religion (v.17), fall below the assurance, at once humble and proud, of resting for time and eternity under the Fatherly care of God. Moreover, the genuineness, nay the actual existence, of religious experience is to be measured not by any transcendency of feeling, nor by great deeds that all men can see, but by the joy and peace that are diffused through the soul that can say "My Father." †

V.19 means that nothing can harm their *true* life,—nor their earthly life except with their Father's permission; it cannot mean that the apostles would escape suffering and persecution, for we know they did not (cf. references in XXVII. 1, *second note*). But, on the other hand, see Acts 28³⁻⁵.

* Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, p. 209.

† Harnack, *What is Christianity*, p. 66.

XXXII.

Read Mt 6²⁵⁻³⁴ (Lk 12²²⁻³²) 10¹⁹⁻²⁰.

1. The certainty of the Father's care should deliver His children from all anxiety. In Mt 6²⁵⁻³⁴ Jesus repeats the warning against anxiety four times (vv. 25. 28. 31. 34).

2. In both Mt and Lk the context shows that the passage was spoken in connection with the laying up of earthly treasure (Mt 6¹⁹⁻²⁴, Lk 12¹³⁻²¹. 33. 34). The disciples are not to allow this to occupy their thoughts, for the Heavenly Father will provide all that they really need.

μη μεριμνᾶτε (Mt 6²⁵ etc.)=not "take no thought," but "be not anxious," "do not worry." V. 25, "Is not the life, etc," *i.e.* God who has already given the one, can surely give the other. V. 27, either (as many good commentators) "add a span to his age," or "add a cubit to his stature," *i.e.* do what God has been doing for him all the years of his growth. V. 30, ὀλιγοπιστοί,—Jesus with His own serene trust in the Father cannot understand such "little faith." V. 32, the different position from other men of those who have received the new revelation,—"your Heavenly Father knoweth."

3. Mt 10¹⁹⁻²⁰. The disciples are again encouraged to dismiss all anxiety,—even in the face of active opposition by men, and on trial for their lives. In such circumstances also they can count on the help of their Heavenly Father.

4. "With the *cares* which He leaves to the men of this world (Mt 6³²), Jesus contrasts the *care* which He recommends to His own (Mt 6³³)" (Godet).

"This paternal care of God for His servants, so pathetically taught by Christ, is the necessary complement of the entire self-consecration which is the cardinal virtue in the ethical code of the kingdom. . . . Christ taught His disciples that the commissariat department was in the hands of their Heavenly Father, so that they had but to play the part of soldiers finding in everything they need."

5. This Fatherly care of God for His children, Jesus held to be one of the most certain and important things in life.† He was so certain of it in His own experience, that He was able to see hints of its expression even in Nature. It is something that *we* find it very hard to believe. But, as Harnack says, "the question is, Who is right,—He with His inexorable 'Take no thought,' or we with our debilitating fears?"‡

* Bruce, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 116.

† Cf. besides the passages studied to-day, Mt 10²⁹⁻³¹ 24⁶, and Studies XXXIII., XXXIV.

‡ *What is Christianity*, p. 86.

XXXIII.

Read Mt 77-11, Mk 11²²⁻²⁴, Mt 18¹⁹⁻²⁰.

1. Another privilege which is granted to the members of the kingdom is that of Prayer. We have to meditate upon Jesus' assurances of the certainty of prayer being answered, until they become real to us. The assurance is repeated six times over in Mt 77.⁸ in order the more firmly to fix it in our hearts.

2. This privilege is based directly upon the Fatherly love of God. He, more than any earthly father, will grant His children's requests (Mt 7⁹⁻¹¹).

3. Are there any limits to the application of these astonishing promises? Jesus makes none; but the promises are made to members of the kingdom whose first object is the advancement of the kingdom (cf. Mt 6³³).

In the Lord's Prayer (Mt 6⁹⁻¹³) the first petitions are for the hallowing of the Father's name and the extension of His kingdom. Seeking this first, the disciples are further justified in asking for such good things as are necessary to their living and working for the kingdom (Mt 6^{11, 13, 33}). The promises do not apply to arbitrary and self-willed requests; they are addressed to disciples, and hold good only so far as men fulfil the conditions of discipleship. But with this caution, Jesus meant them to be accepted literally, and to be believed in their unlimited fulness and immensity of meaning. He had absolute confidence in the Father's readiness to hear His children, and in the laws of the moral world.

NOTE.—To thoroughly study Jesus' teaching about Prayer would take many days. The B.C.C.U. has published a separate series of Studies on this subject. At present we are seeking to get an idea of Jesus' teaching as a whole, and have not time to enter too much into detail. Let us be content with clearly grasping the great importance that Prayer had in His eyes, and the absolute confidence He had that it would receive an answer. The passages in which He teaches with regard to Prayer are Mt 6⁹⁻¹⁵ 77-11, Lk 11-13, Mt 937-38 (= Lk 102), Mk 929 (= Mt 1720), Mt 1819-20, Lk 181-14, Mk 1120-25 (= Mt 2120-22) 1240 (= Lk 2047) 1318 (= Mt 2420), Lk 2136, Mt 2511-13. We may learn from His example in Lk 321, Mk 135 (= Lk 442), Lk 516 (= Mk 145) 612 (= Mk 313) 916 (= Mt 1419, Mk 641), Mt 1423 (= Mk 646), Mk 734 86 (= Mt 1536), Lk 918-20 1021 (Mt 1125-26) 2217-19 (= Mt 2626-27, Mk 1422-23) 2239-46 (= Mt 2636-46, Mk 1432-42), Mt 2653, Lk 2334, Mt 2745 (= Mk 1534), Lk 2346.

XXXIV.

Read Lk 11⁵⁻⁸ 181-8.

1. Though Jesus unwaveringly asserted the reality of the Father's care and the certainty of answers to prayer, He was not unaware how often the facts of life seem to contradict this

assurance. The parables we study to-day were spoken to encourage the disciples to persevere in their prayer and confidence in spite of such contradiction.

"From the lessons He taught His disciples on Perseverance in Prayer, it appears how well aware He was that God often shows Himself so little like a Father, that those who trust in Him are tempted to think Him rather like a man of selfish spirit who cares only for his own comfort, or like an unjust judge who is indifferent to right. Such precisely are the representations of God as He appears in the two parables of the Selfish Neighbour and the Unjust Judge. The relevancy of the parables requires that these characters should be regarded as representing God, not as He is indeed, but as He seems to tried faith."

2. Lk 11⁵⁻⁸. Unabashed persistence will prevail upon an unwilling friend, *much more certainly* will it avail with the Father in heaven. This certainty of their prayer being answered should make the disciples persevere until it *is* answered.

"A friend of mine is come" (v. 6),—"therefore the service which we owe towards others may be alleged in prayer as a ground for being heard" (Bengel). V. 8, "importunity," Gk. *ἀναίδεια* = absence of *αἰδώς*, shamelessness. Vv. 9, 10 (= Mt 7. 7-8), which we have already studied, gain a new meaning from this parable; the three commands form a climax of increasing earnestness—"ask . . . seek . . . knock."

3. Lk 18¹⁻⁸. "If an *unjust judge* would *yield to the importunity* of an *unknown widow*, who came and *spoke to him at intervals*, how much more will a *just God* be ready to *reward the perseverance* of *His own elect*, who *cry to Him day and night*?" (Plummer).

V. 2. Even on *such* a judge importunity will prevail. V. 5, "wear me out," Gk. *ὑποτινάξω* = (1) give a black eye, (2) beat black and blue, (3) mortify, annoy greatly (1 Cor 9²⁷); some prefer the literal meaning, "Lest she come at last and give me a black eye," taking it as a humorous exaggeration on the part of the judge. The last words of v. 7 may mean either "while He is slow to act for them," i.e. God will hear in spite of the delay, or "and is not impatient at their importunity," as the unjust judge was.

XXXV.

See Introduction, V. 3, VI.

* 1. Consider the interpretation of Mk 3²⁸⁻³⁰. What is meant, and what is *not* meant, by the sin against the Holy Spirit?

2. Discuss the two questions raised in XXX.

Especially be sure that you can justify your interpretation of v. 47.

* 3. Explain as fully as possible the meaning of Lk 10²⁰.

* Bruce, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 120.

With regard to each of these first three questions for United Study, one member might be asked to consult a good commentary on each of the passages and bring a report.

* 4. How far does God's Fatherly care extend? (Study XXXII.). Does Jesus literally mean that there should be *no* worry, *no* fear in the Christian's life? Can we accept His unfaltering optimism? Which view of life is the true one,—ours or His?

5. Discuss the remarks in XXXII. 4. What is the connection between God's Fatherly care and man's whole-hearted devotion to the interests of the kingdom?

* 6. What does Jesus teach with regard to Prayer?

Each member might be invited to contribute points which have specially impressed him.

* 7. Enumerate the blessings of the kingdom which have been so far studied, and show how they naturally flow from Jesus' revelation of the FATHER.

At least ten or fifteen minutes should be left for the consideration of this last question.

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STUDIES XXXVI.-LVI.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE KINGDOM.

The Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, XXXVI.-XXXVIII.

The Righteousness of the Kingdom :

A Matter of the Heart, XXXIX.

A Positive Principle, XL.

Its Motive and its Reward, XLI.

Righteousness in relation to God :

Trust, XLIII.

Humility, XLIV.

Service, XLV.

Righteousness in relation to Christ—Discipleship, XLVI.

Righteousness in relation to Men :

Love, XLVII.

The Exacting Nature of Jesus' Demand, XLVIII.

Jesus' Paradoxes, I.

Avoidance of Anger, LI.

Forgiveness, LII.

Avoidance of Judging and Exaggeration, LIII.

Service, LIV.

The Character of the Members of the Kingdom, LV.

XXXVI.

Read Mt 5²⁰, Mk 7¹⁻²³.

1. In Mt 5²⁰ Jesus contrasts the righteousness which He demands from members of the kingdom with the current righteousness,—that of the Scribes and Pharisees. Of this current righteousness He was an unsparing critic. We must try, therefore, to discover what were the defects of this false righteousness, and why Jesus held it to be, as He here declares, altogether insufficient to secure entrance into the kingdom.

2. In Mk 7¹⁻²³ the charge which Jesus brings against the Pharisaic righteousness is, that it exalts the trivial above the important, the customs of men above the law of God, the external above the internal.

Vv. 3-5. The Pharisees charge Jesus' disciples with a breach of the law of righteousness,—in what did it consist? Vv. 6, 8. Jesus replies that they have put what is merely a human tradition on a level with the commandments of God; they imagine that by observing the former they will please God, but such worship is "in vain." Vv. 9-13. Jesus adduces an instance in which these formal traditions are allowed to override God's eternal law of right and wrong. The Jews were addicted to making rash and hasty vows; and the Scribes and Pharisees taught that such vows must be strictly adhered to, even when the strongest moral duties, *e.g.* the support of parents, demanded that they should be broken.* Vv. 14-15. "The principle which had been asserted was too important to be dropped; it touched the heart of things, and was necessary for all." So Jesus calls the multitude, and lays down in v. 15 "a fundamental canon, differentiating the kingdom of God from Pharisaic Judaism" (Swete). Vv. 17-23. This was too revolutionary a principle to be understood at the time; even the inner circle of disciples needed to ask for an explanation, nor after it had been given were they able to receive it. Peter, who was the spokesman on this occasion (Mt 15¹⁵), needed a reiteration of the truth in a heavenly vision (Acts 10⁹⁻¹⁶) before he could accept it.

3. The clear, glowing intuition of Jesus pierces through the superficial forms of religion and goes straight to its inner reality. It is doubtful whether the lesson, so hard for the disciples to learn, has even yet been fully mastered. Christians are still divided and separated by insistence on things that are outward and formal, while crying moral iniquities and defilements, individual and social, are overlooked and tolerated. See Study XLII. 6.

* See Hastings' *BD*, i. 479; Edersheim, ii. 17 ff.

XXXVII.

Read Mk 12³⁸⁻⁴⁰, Mt 23¹⁻¹².

1. During the closing days of His life the conflict between Jesus and contemporary Judaism came to a crisis, and He felt it necessary to pronounce upon this false righteousness a deliberate and final condemnation. In Mk 12³⁸⁻⁴⁰ He brings against it the charge of ostentation and affectation. What the Scribes desired was not to *be* righteous, but to *be thought to be* righteous.

"In common with all great reformers, Christ felt that honesty in word and deed was the fundamental virtue; dishonesty, including affectation, self-consciousness, love of stage effect, the one incurable vice."

V.⁴⁰, "greater condemnation," *i.e.* greater than the man who makes no such pretence; to the sentence on the robber will be added that on the hypocrite.

We are hardly to-day in danger of such a *vulgar* display and ostentation; but in more refined forms, is not insincerity still one of the deadliest foes of piety and virtue? See Study XLII. 6.

2. Mt. gives a much fuller and more detailed account of Jesus' final denunciation of the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

V.³, "these do and observe,"—Christ did not wish to incite the people to resistance against established authority (cf. v.²³, Mt 17²⁷), but to warn the people against the wrong spirit in which the observances were carried out. V.⁴, "heavy burdens," *i.e.* the endless number of minute regulations (cf. Acts 15¹⁰). The charge in this verse is that of harsh and exacting service. How different is Christ's yoke of love (11³⁰)! In vv.⁵⁻⁶ we have the charge of affectation and ostentation, which we have already considered. Vv.⁸⁻¹², an earnest warning aside to His disciples. "In spite of this earnest warning, the love of pre-eminence and leadership has prevailed in the Church to the detriment of independence, the sense of responsibility and loyalty to God" (Bruce).

3. "From all blindness of heart; from pride, vainglory, and hypocrisy; from envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness,
Good Lord, deliver us."

XXXVIII.

Read Mt 23¹³⁻³⁶.

1. The seven woes uttered against Pharisaism. What is the special charge made in each? Try in each instance to state it in a single word or brief phrase.

V.13, "ye shut up,"—the actual effect, not the intended. How would the teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees tend to keep men out of the kingdom? "Hypocrites"=literally, *actors*.

V.14 omitted in best MSS. and RV.

V.15. In spite of their unworthiness to exercise the function of teacher, they were most zealous to do it.

Vv.16-22, their casuistry in the matter of oaths.

Vv.23-24, laying emphasis on the trivial, neglecting the all-important. "Judgement"=the distinction between right and wrong. "Faith" (*πίστις*) here=fidelity, sincerity (cf. Tit 2¹⁰, Ro 3³). Lk. (11⁴²) has "judgement and the love of God." Note that Christ does not condemn the carefulness about trifles; He only insists on the all-importance of essentials.

V.25, "full from extortion and excess," *i.e.* full of wine and meat which are the proceeds of rapacity. In Lk 11³⁹ the sense is slightly different, the external cleansing being contrasted with the *hearts* of the Pharisees.

Vv.27-28. The hypocrisy of the Pharisees is described by a graphic simile,— graves white and fair on the outside, but inside full of rotteness.

Vv.29-32. Their apparent zeal for the prophets is contrasted with their actual attitude towards their teaching. V.31, *i.e.* by calling them your *fathers* (v.30), —they are your fathers, you are true descendants of those murderers.

Vv.33-36, the frightful consequence and issue of the course they were pursuing.

2. We are not surprised to find how earnestly Jesus warned His disciples against "the leaven of the Scribes and Pharisees" (Mt 16^{11, 12}, Lk 12¹). Pharisaism as a system is dead, but its spirit still lives, and is an enemy to be reckoned with. See Study XIII. 6.

"Pharisaism laid exclusive stress on the outward act; whence it came to pass, as we have seen, that legal piety might be associated with various evil dispositions. . . . In its other leading characteristics—the burdensomeness of its innumerable enactments, the chicanery to which it had recourse to ease the self-made burden, and its tendency to neglect great duties in zeal for trifling observances—Pharisaism was equally alien from the kingdom of God."

XXXIX.

Read Mt 7¹⁵⁻²¹, 24-27 12⁵³⁻³⁷.

1. The Pharisees in their idea of righteousness laid the stress on the *outward act*. A man was righteous if he did what the law commanded, and refrained from what the law forbade. Jesus taught that righteousness had its seat in the *heart*: "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God" (Mt 5⁸). He thus made a much higher and more difficult demand upon men (Mt 5²⁰).

* Bruce, *The Kingdom of God*, pp. 203, 204.

For to refrain from stealing, lying, etc., and to observe outward forms and ceremonies, is far easier than to have a pure heart.

We see this teaching of Jesus very clearly in Mt 5²¹⁻⁴⁸, where He pronounces angry feelings, impure desires, etc., to be as blame-worthy as murder and adultery. These passages, however, will be studied in detail later.

2. In Mt 7¹⁶⁻¹⁸ 12³³ Jesus lays down the great principle which lay at the roots of His view of righteousness, that as the quality of fruit is a direct result of the kind or quality of the tree, so *a man's actions are the direct result of the state of his heart*. It follows from this that if you want to make men good, you cannot do so by imposing on them additional commands and restrictions, but only by making their hearts right,—“Make the *tree* good.”

3. But, on the other hand, outward actions are important as the test and revelation of the state of the heart. They are the overflow of what is in it (περίσσευμα τῆς καρδίας, Mt 12³⁴), and by them the character of men may be known (Mt 7^{16, 20}).

4. This enormous significance as being an index of the state of the heart attaches even to words (Mt 12^{36, 37}).

“There is nothing which to the ordinary man appears more trivial than a word. What is it? A breath converted into sound: out it goes on the air, and is carried away by the wind; and there is an end of it. No, said Jesus, it does not end there, and it does not end ever: when once it is called into existence by the creative force of the will, it becomes a living thing separated from our control; it goes ranging through time and space, doing good or evil; and it will confront us again at the last day (v. 36). At that solemn crisis the influence of our words on our destiny will be extraordinary (v. 37). There is nothing of which the average man is more surely convinced than that his tongue is his own, and that he can at will make it utter words either good or evil. Very different was Christ's estimate: words are inevitable; the speaker cannot alter their character unless he first alter his own” (v. 34, 35).¹

5. Since what Jesus demands is a real and radical goodness, only those who manifest the rightness of their heart by *doing* the will of the Father can enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt 7²¹, cf. Lk 11²⁸). Sentimental and aesthetic admiration can never take the place of heroic action.

Jesus illustrates the difference between doing and only hearing by a parable (Mt 7²⁴⁻²⁷). Only that which has a solid foundation will endure the searching tests of temptation and judgment; and in the spiritual life the only solid foundation is *reality*. The parable teaches “a formidable lesson for this age of rapid workmanship; an age which resents the necessity for underground work and silent preparation.” †

* Stalker, *The Christology of Jesus*, pp. 10, 11.

† Gore, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 184.

XL.

Read Mt 6^{22, 23}, Mk 12²⁸⁻³⁴, Lk 11²⁴⁻²⁶.

1. Jesus asserts the principle of the all-importance of the state of the heart in another form when He speaks of the "single eye" (Mt 6^{22, 23}).

As in the body illumination depends on the eye, the organ of sight, being free from distortion, normal, sound (*ἀπλούς*), so in the moral sphere, when a man's heart is sound and set in the right direction, he will be able to act wisely and well.

2. This all-important right state of the heart, from which good actions must naturally and necessarily flow, is one of LOVE. Jesus regarded the whole duty of man as summed up in the one word Love,—love to God, and love to man (Mk 12²⁸⁻³⁴). Let a man but fulfil these two great commandments, and all else will follow; he will be a righteous man.

3. We have to note that in Jesus' view righteousness is something *positive*. It is not a mere refraining from any breach of the law; it is an active, enthusiastic state of mind.

The author of *Ecce Homo* points out the difference between the conception of Jesus as to what constitutes that right state of mind from which good actions must necessarily flow, and the view of the philosophers. "They placed it in reason, and regarded passion as the antagonistic power which must be controlled and coerced by it. Christ also considers it necessary to control the passions, but He places them under the dominion, not of reason, but of a new and more powerful passion. The healthy mind of the philosophers is in a composed, tranquil, and impartial state; the healthy mind of Christ is in an elevated and enthusiastic state. Both are exempt from perturbation and unsteadiness, but the one by being immovably fixed, the other by being always powerfully attracted in one direction" (p. 137). And again, with reference to this passage (Mk 12²⁸⁻³⁴), "Jesus declared an ardent, passionate, or devoted state of mind to be the root of virtue" (*ibid.*).

4. Lk 11²⁴⁻²⁶ shows how essential Jesus considered it that a man should have some positive principle of virtue. If the house be only "empty," the last state may be worse than the first.

The context of the parallel passage in Mt 12⁴³⁻⁴⁵ (see vv. 38-42, and last sentence of v. 45) suggests that Jesus meant the parable to apply to the condition of the Jewish nation, as well as to the state of the individual.*

* Cf. Wendt, *Teaching of Jesus*, i. 167, ii. 361.

XLI.

Read Mt 6¹⁻¹⁸, Mk 12⁴¹⁻⁴⁴.

1. In Mt 6¹⁻¹⁸ Jesus teaches His disciples *how* they are to perform their righteousness (v.¹, RV). The only motive must be the glory, praise, and love of God.

2. Those who do their righteousness to win men's praise get their reward. Jesus does not deny the reality or value of this return. But in getting this they have *exhausted* their reward (ἀπείχουσι, 6^{2.5.16}). This may be all they want, but they will certainly get nothing else.

3. This principle is exhibited in relation to our duty towards our neighbour (vv.²⁻⁴), towards God (vv.⁵⁻¹⁵), and towards ourselves (vv.¹⁶⁻¹⁸)* Almsgiving may be taken as a type of works of mercy ; prayer, of intercourse with God ; fasting, of self-mastery.

V.6. Note the four times repeated "thy" (σου). Augustine gives a mystical as well as a literal meaning to "thy closet,"—"this 'closet' or chamber is the heart of man ; 'the door' the avenues of sense by which disturbing and defiling thoughts of the world enter in. . . . Wert thou speaking with me, and that, not asking a favour, but as with thine equal, and shouldst thou suddenly break off and give a message to thy servant, could I otherwise than esteem it an affront? Yet this is what thou dost daily with thy God."† This withdrawal into our closet, to be alone with our Father in secret, is the only thing that will give us the will and power to do our righteousness for His eye alone.

4. Jesus does not disparage the seeking of a reward, only the seeking it in a wrong place. It may be—and has been—objected that this makes virtue mercenary. But when we remember what the reward is, the objection ceases to have weight.

"We cannot separate love for God from a desire to find our own happiness in God. This is inseparable from personality. We must crave for ultimate satisfaction, recognition, approval. . . . If the seeking of the Divine reward has done harm in religion, that is because the character of the God whom we seek, as revealed in the character and teaching of Jesus Christ, has not been attended to."‡

5. That an act is to be estimated, not by its external character, but by the motive which causes it, is emphatically taught by Jesus in Mk 12⁴¹⁻⁴⁴. The earnestness with which Jesus desired to enforce the lesson is shown by His deliberately calling the disciples to Him (v.⁴³), and by the solemn "verily" (ἀμὲν) by which the lesson is introduced (ἀληθώς, Lk 21⁸).

* Bengel.

† Trench, *Augustine's Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount*.

‡ Gore, *The Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 106, 107.

XLII.

See Introduction, V. 3, VI.

1. Enumerate some of the outward characteristics and positive elements of the Pharisaic righteousness, *e.g.* salutations, chief seats, washings, different forms of casuistry.

* 2. What, then, were the underlying faults of this "righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees" which made it so incurably bad? Enumerate and describe these as fully as you can.

* 3. Compare the answers of each member to XXXVIII. 1.

* 4. What was Jesus' conception of righteousness?

Do not be content with vague generalities, but try to reach clear and definite conclusions that can be put down on paper. Let the leader write down at the meeting the conclusions as they are reached.

5. Should we do good actions for the sake of a reward? (XLI. 4).

If one member could bring a summary of *Eccle Homo*, chap. xi., it would add to the interest.

* 6. It might be helpful to mention instances and practices in modern life to which the warnings and teachings of this week's Studies are specially applicable. What forms does Pharisaic righteousness take nowadays? What elements in Jesus' teaching about righteousness seem to need special emphasis to-day? Consider this question, especially in relation to the points in XXXVI. 3, XXXVII. 1, XXXVIII. 2, XXXIX. 5, XLI. 3.

This question is perhaps one more for private consideration than for discussion at the meeting. There is nothing to be gained by criticising practices of other Christians with whom we disagree. But if members were to suggest from their own experience temptations and difficulties upon which the teaching of this week seems especially to bear, it might help to make it more living and fruitful.

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XLIII.

Read Mk 11²²⁻²⁴ 9¹⁴⁻²⁹ 4⁴⁰.

1. We have already seen (XL. 2) that Jesus asserted that the supreme duty of man was to love God with all the powers of his whole nature (Mk 12³⁰). To the man who fulfils this commandment God's interests—the glory of His name, the fulfilment of His will, the advancement of His kingdom—will be the dominant and absorbing purpose of life (Mt 6^{9, 10, 33}).

2. This love towards God includes especially a childlike *trust* in Him. We have already (XXXI., XXXII.) considered this trust in God's care as a privilege; Jesus also regarded it as a duty. He gave His disciples the command, *Have faith in God* (Mk 11²²).

Wendt points out that, except when He is using OT language, as in Mk 12³⁰, Jesus prefers to describe man's relation to God as one of *trust*, rather than one of *love*. In Mk 12³⁰ the word "love" rightly indicates "the moral inwardness of man's due attitude to the will of God, in contrast with mere external worship. Yet, on the other hand, the conception (*i.e.* that of *love*) is so general that it does not adequately express that special kind of relation of men to God demanded by the knowledge of His full sovereignty over them, the greatness and gratuitousness of His Fatherly love towards them, and the immensity of His power placed at the disposal of His love. So far as these latter qualities were involved in His conception of God, it was a matter of course that Jesus should enjoin upon men that disposition and peculiar relation to God which, according to its very idea, includes both the attitude of spirit towards God and the acknowledgment of His infinite love and power, and the humble yet happy assurance of His salvation, —I mean *Trust* (πίστις, πιστεύειν)." *

3. In Mk 9¹⁹ 4⁴⁰ we see how much the absence in His disciples of this trust in God surprised and pained Jesus.

When Jesus descended from the Mount of Transfiguration, where He had been enjoying such intimate fellowship with His Father that the glory communicated itself even to His physical frame (Lk 9²⁹, Mk 9⁸), He found Himself in an utterly different atmosphere. He was confronted with the aggressive unbelief of the Scribes (Mk 9¹⁴), the idle curiosity of the multitude (v. 13), the doubt of the father (v. 24), and the complete failure of the disciples' faith (vv. 18, 28). No wonder that this atmosphere of unbelief should have struck a chill to His heart and drawn from Him a cry of pain (v. 17).

4. The words we study to-day are simple and familiar. But there is no greater achievement in human life, no more difficult attainment, than to learn to HAVE FAITH IN GOD.

* Wendt, *Teaching of Jesus*, i. 288, 289.

XLIV.

Read Lk 18⁹⁻¹⁴ 14⁷⁻¹¹.1. A necessary quality in man's relation to God is *humility*.

2. The lesson which the parable in Lk 18⁹⁻¹⁴ is meant to teach is told us in the last verse: "Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

This principle holds in men's dealings with one another. Towards a man boasting of his good deeds people are inclined to be critical and severe; one who bitterly accuses himself they judge leniently and sympathetically. Jesus teaches that God deals with men after a not unlike fashion.

Let us note the vivid details of the parable. V.¹¹, "stood" (*σταθίς*), i.e. took up his position, "confidently, in his wonted place" (Bengel), "with assurance, and even boldness" (Godet). "With himself" (*προς ἑαυτὸν*),—his thoughts never rose above himself to God, whom he professed to be addressing. V.¹³, "standing" (*ιστάς*), just where he was, "neither taking his stand confidently (like the Pharisee), nor falling on his knees lest he should be looked at in praying" (Bengel). "Me the sinner" (RV Marg.),—the consciousness of his own sin absorbs him, "he thinks of no one else" (Bengel).

There is nothing in the parable to indicate that the Pharisee's and the publican's estimate of themselves was not *true*. Yet it was the publican who "was justified," i.e. accepted by God. What Jesus wants to teach is that "a man confessing sin is nearer to true goodness than a man boasting of his goodness." * We must reflect upon this until we are convinced that it is so, and understand why it is so.

"Consider what a man does who denies sin. He simply identifies himself with his sin, and compels God to treat him and it as one. . . . But confess your sin, say it is yours, and you separate yourself from it, show that though it is yours, it is not you, show that there is something in the heart of your being that abhors it." †

3. The self-confidence of the Pharisee sprang from the pharisaic conception of righteousness (XXXVI.—XXXVIII.). If we think of righteousness as a matter of outward acts, we shall be apt to be satisfied when we have done a certain number of these. But if, as Jesus taught (XXXIX.—XLI.), religion is a relation between the soul and God, the nearer we get to God the more we shall be conscious of our own unworthiness.

4. In Lk 14⁷⁻¹¹ Jesus finds in the customs of ordinary social intercourse an illustration ("parable," v.⁷) of the same principle. The principle is worthy of observation, even as a counsel of prudence in social life. But it is also the basis and method of the Divine government (v.¹¹).

In vv.^{10, 11} Jesus is speaking of *real* humility, not of "the pride that apes humility."

* Bruce, *Practical Teaching of Christ*, p. 319.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 321, 322.

XLV.

Read Mt 5¹⁶, Lk 177-10.

1. Love to God will lead us to serve God and seek to advance His glory (cf. XLIII. 1). True love always seeks the interests of the one who is loved. There are two alternatives for a man's life: he may assert himself, or he may assert God. If he loves God, he will choose the latter. Hence Jesus bids us so live that men seeing our lives may glorify our Father which is in heaven (Mt 5¹⁶).

2. "Hence, Jesus often represented this life by parables which teach the necessity of work, watchfulness, and fidelity, *e.g.* the parables of the Labourers in the Vineyard (Mt 20¹⁻¹⁶), of the Talents (Mt 25¹⁴⁻³⁰), and of the Pounds (Lk 19¹¹⁻²⁷). 'Why stand ye here all the day idle?' is the challenge of the master of the vineyard (Mt 20⁶). Christ's servants are like labourers (Mt 20¹): they are like servants who are entrusted with the use of their master's wealth (Mt 25¹⁴, Lk 19¹¹). Thus is the requirement of labour, the necessity of fidelity, insisted upon. Yet it is not merely the amount of work done by which faithfulness is measured. The faithful use of one talent would be as acceptable as the faithful use of ten (Mt 25²⁷). Those who enter the vineyard at the eleventh hour are graciously rewarded with the same wages as those who worked from the early morning (Mt 20^{8, 14}). The services which love renders cannot be quantitatively measured."

These parables are not intended to be studied to-day in detail, but only to illustrate the thought suggested in paragraph 1.

3. The duty of unsparing and ungrudging service is especially enforced in Lk 177-10. Dr. Bruce has a very helpful interpretation of this parable.† At first sight it has a somewhat harsh look about it. But Dr. Bruce finds that "Christ's purpose is not to teach in what spirit God deals with His servants, but rather in what spirit we should serve God."

"Christ would have His disciples understand that the Christian vocation is a very high one indeed; that for those who give themselves to it, it not merely brings hard toil in the fields through the day, but also, so to speak, extra duties in the evening, when the weary labourer would fain be at rest; that it has no fixed hours of labour, eight, ten, twelve, as the case may be, according to agreement, but may summon to work at any hour of all the twenty-four, as in the case of soldiers in time of war, or of farm labourers in the season of harvest, when the grain must be secured when weather is propitious."

"We are unprofitable servants" is to be *our* confession, springing out of a sense of redemption; nothing that we can ever do can repay what God has done for us. But God's estimate of our toil may be different (Lk 12^{36, 37}, Mt 25²¹). Cf. Bengel, "Unhappy is the man whom the Lord calls an unprofitable servant (Mt 25³⁰); happy is he who calls himself so (Lk 17¹⁰)."

* Stevens, *NT Theology*, p. 115.

† *Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, pp. 168-177.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

XLVI.

Read Mt 4¹⁸⁻²² 23¹⁰ 10^{24, 25} 16²⁴.

1. Jesus called His disciples to a personal following of Himself (Mt 4¹⁹).* He claimed to be their Master, Leader (*καθηγητής*, Mt 23¹⁰). He expected them to share His fortunes (Mt 10^{24, 25}). He inexorably demanded from those who would become His disciples, that they should deny themselves and follow in His footsteps (Mt 16²⁴). These words are simple, but they revolutionise a man's life. *To follow Christ*,—what does that not mean?

2. "The law which Christ gave was not only illustrated, but infinitely enlarged by His deeds. For every deed was itself a precedent to be followed, and therefore to discuss the legislation of Christ is to discuss His character; for it may justly be said that *Christ Himself is the Christian Law*."†

3. Dr. Bruce suggests four outstanding features of Christ's life which the Christian is bound to imitate. "It behoves the Christian to imitate the Master in His *sympathies* with the objects of pity, the poor, the sorrowful, the sinful; in His *antipathies* against the religious vices of Pharisaism; in His *lowliness*; and in His heroic *devotion* to duty at whatever cost of self-sacrifice."‡

4. The immense significance of the fact that the Christian's ideal is a *Person* has been well expressed by Principal Caird: "Christianity presents to us the moral ideal in a form which calls forth all the ardour and intensity of the personal affections. . . . It lends to moral effort the wonderful accession of power, the warmth and intensity, the sweetness and joy, which are possible only in our relations to a living personality. In the person and life of Christ, the moral ideal, so to speak, takes visible form and embodiment; truth, goodness, purity, righteousness present themselves to us, not as abstract ideas or unrealised qualities, but in the living, breathing characteristics of a concrete personality, for whom we can feel—what the former can never create—the admiration, reverence, love of a personal devotion."§

* Cf. also Lk 9⁵⁹, Mk 2¹⁴ 10²¹.

† Bruce, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 219.

§ *Fundamental Ideas of Christianity*, ii. 84.

† *Ecce Homo*, p. 103.

XLVII.

Read Lk 10²⁵⁻³⁷, Mt 7¹².

1. In Lk 10²⁵⁻²⁸ Jesus gives His emphatic approval to that summary, in the mouth of another, of man's duty to God and man, which on a different occasion * (Mt 22³⁴⁻⁴⁰, Study XL. 2) He Himself enunciated as the sum of the whole law: "This do," He says, "and thou shalt live."

That the lawyer should quote Dt 6⁵ was quite natural; the Jews had it written on their phylacteries, and recited it morning and evening. That he should have had the insight to add to it Lk 19¹⁸ is more remarkable; Jesus may have helped him by a leading question.

"To love is, as Jesus says, the path to life, or rather it is life itself. God has no higher life than that of love. . . . The Gospel does not differ from the law in its aim; it is distinguished from it only by its indication of means and the communication of strength" (Godet).

2. The command to love one's neighbour as one's self was asserted by Jesus in other words in the Golden Rule (Mt 7¹²).

"The human heart is so conditioned that it knows very well at all times what is due to it from others according to the law of love, while its own charitable duty is obscured by its natural selfishness. It has only, therefore, to change places, and ask itself what it would desire from others in a like case, in order to know what it should do in any instance." †

3. In answer to the lawyer's question as to the meaning of the word "neighbour," Jesus shows by a parable that the man whose heart is full of love can have no doubt as to whom he can be a neighbour.

V.29, "desiring to justify himself," *i.e.* to put himself in the right. Perhaps the keen look and piercing words of Jesus opened up before him a new vision of the lofty demands of the law, and drove him to seek an excuse for the shortcomings of which he began to be conscious.

V.31, "*by chance*"—"many good opportunities lie hid under those things which may seem to be matters of chance" (Bengel).

Vv.31, 32, "*he passed by*." "Very noticeable is the repetition of the expressive word ἀντιπαρῆλθιν. The very word suggests the idea of what is customary—the way of the world—and, in the present case, of the religious world. The first comer passed by, the second passed by; and in nine cases out of ten that is what you may expect" (Bruce).

V.33, "was touched with pity,"—that sacred feeling will keep *him* from passing by.

* Unless the two incidents are to be identified. See Commentaries. Besides many differences in detail, the matter at issue in each is quite different: in the one the question is a speculative (Mt 22³⁶), in the other a practical one (Lk 10²⁵).

† Beyschlag, *NT Theology*, i. 116.

V.³⁶. The original question is inverted,—not “Who is my neighbour?” but “Who proved neighbour?” “In the estimation of Jesus, to be a neighbour was not to have *rights*, but to be conscious of *duties*.”* Wherever need is, true love will show itself neighbour.

XLVIII.

Read Mt 5⁴³⁻⁴⁸, Lk 6^{27. 28. 32-36}.

1. Jesus explicitly bids us extend our love to those who hate and ill-treat us (Mt 5⁴⁴, Lk 6^{27. 28}).

Mt 5⁴³, “hate thine enemy,” not actually found in the OT, but in great measure expressing its spirit; † at the same time, there were not wanting in the older revelation anticipations of Christ’s higher law. ‡

What loving our enemies means is explained by the clauses that follow. We are to earnestly desire their good (“pray for them,” “bless them,” Mt 5⁴⁴, Lk 6²⁸), and to express this desire in kindly actions whenever opportunity offers (“do good to them,” Lk 6²⁷).

2. The ground on which this command is based is very noteworthy. It is God’s nature to love all men; and those who have become His sons must partake of their Father’s character (Mt 5⁴⁵, Lk 6³⁵).

“Perfect” (Mt 5⁴⁸), i.e. complete, seeking to realise the highest ideal, to love to the uttermost. Lk. has “merciful” (6³⁶).

It is to be noticed how in these verses Jesus places morality on a religious foundation. “There is no place in the teaching of Jesus for a morality which is not based upon religion.” §

3. Jesus distinctly asserts that the morality of His disciples is to surpass the ordinary morality of the world. It is to exceed not only the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees (Mt 5²⁰), but also the righteousness of ordinary men (Mt 5^{46. 47}, Lk 6³²⁻³⁴).

When we reflect on how much genuine kindness, chivalry, courage, manliness, honour, and general nobility of character is often found in those who make no profession of religion, and the extent to which selfishness, meanness, pettiness, avarice, and indifference to misery and wrong prevail in the Christian Church and in our own characters, we may well ask ourselves, “What do ye more than others?” “What our Lord asks of us is something which requires the supernatural or Divine motive to account for it. Here, then, we have a serious question. Consider your actions, your ordinary dealings with others. Are they such as can be accounted for by convenience and social requirement, or does your conduct require the Divine motive, the motive of fellowship with God, to explain it and make it possible?” ¶

* Matthews, *The Social Teaching of Jesus*, p. 177.

† E.g. Dt 23⁶, Ps 39¹³⁻²⁴ 139¹⁻²⁰. But it must be remembered that Israel’s enemies were God’s enemies, and the hatred springs from a zeal for God’s cause. Cf. e.g. Kirkpatrick on the *Psalms* in the “Cambridge Bible for Schools,” Introd. chap. ix.

‡ E.g. Ex 23⁴, Lv 19^{17. 18}, Pr 20²³ 25²¹ etc.

§ Gilbert, *Revelation of Jesus*, p. 131.

¶ Gore, *The Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 100, 101.

XLIX.

See Introduction, V. 3, VI.

* 1. State as fully as you can what you consider to be Jesus' teaching about righteousness in relation to God. Get down on paper as many facts as possible.

* 2. Why does Jesus especially emphasise *Trust* or *Faith* as summing up man's relation to God? (XLIII. 2, *small print*).

3. "A man confessing sin is nearer to true goodness than a man boasting of his goodness" (XLIV. 2). Is this true? If so, *how* is it true?

4. What lesson or lessons do you think that the parable in Lk 17⁷⁻¹⁰ is meant to teach?

* 5. What is demanded of us in the command to love our enemies?

• One member might be asked to bring a brief report on the OT teaching with regard to the treatment of enemies (XLVIII. 1, *note*).

* 6. In what way does Jesus base our duty to man upon our duty to God? (XLVIII. 2).

• In discussing the questions in this Study, it may be well to bear in mind the suggestion made in Introd. VI. 3 (*last sentence*).

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L.

Read Mt 5³⁸⁻⁴².

1. In seeking to understand these hard sayings of Jesus, we have to keep in mind His method of teaching. He did not reduce His teaching to a system, but rather threw out brief, pregnant, paradoxical sayings, which would fix themselves in men's memories and set them thinking by their very strangeness.*

"If our Lord had delivered a treatise telling men what they were to do in the ordinary occasions of life, the precepts must have been so encumbered by qualifications that all impressiveness would have been lost. If to the saying, 'Give to him that asketh of thee,' our Lord had appended all the obvious exceptions,—such as the cases in which what is asked for would be hurtful,—the whole force of the passage would have been frittered away. As long as a preacher delivers broad truths, put forcibly, his audience are ready to hear; but as soon as he begins 'and if', his statements and to make exceptions, his hold over his hearers is gone, and they think he is unsaying what he said."†

2. Keeping this in mind, we must seek to discover what *principle* Jesus meant to assert in these paradoxical sayings. Surely it is that, "*as far as itself is concerned*, love knows no limits to its self-denial; if, therefore, it ever puts a stop to its concessions, it is in no way because it feels its patience exhausted; true love is infinite as God Himself, whose essence it is" (Godet).

While this spirit may, and should, always direct our actions, we can see that a literal observance of the precepts is impossible. Jesus Himself did not grant every request, cf. Mk 1^{37, 38, 39}; Mt 8^{11, 12}; Lk 12¹³; nor did He literally offer the other cheek at His trial (Jn. 18^{22, 23}). "*As far as one's own feeling is concerned*, we are bound to obey the precepts; but other considerations may stand in the way of a literal carrying of them out.

The three precepts in vv. 39-41 have been described as relating to body, property, and freedom; or, to injuries connected with honour, material good, waste of time. V. 41 refers probably to impressment (*ἀγγαρεύματα*, see RV marg.) for government or military purposes; we are to cheerfully bear burdens imposed on us by the State.

3. To say that these sayings are not to be interpreted literally is in nowise to diminish the exacting nature of the command. It has been well said that they are intended to "arouse the conscience by baffling the understanding." That they have this effect is beyond question: they stimulate the conscience in a way in which a mere general precept could never do. Try to obey them, and see.

* Cf. Introduction, III. (b).

† Latham, *Pastor Pastorum*, pp. 211, 212; cf. also Robertson, *Our Lord's Teaching* (enlarged edition), pp. 10-12; Stevens, *The Teaching of Jesus*, p. 38.

"Jesus was not careful to guard against misunderstandings. It has been a salutary exercise for His followers to find out what was the true sense of His sayings for themselves."* A sincere heart will solve for us many of the difficulties. The greatest help to the interpretation of these precepts is to seek to put them in practice.

LI.

Read Mt 5²¹⁻²⁴ 18⁶. 7. 10.

1. The law of love forbids the cherishing of any feeling of hatred or ill-will against our brother (Mt 5²¹⁻²⁴). As we have seen (XXXIX. 1), the law of the righteousness of the kingdom extends not merely to outward actions, but to the feelings of the heart.

"It is one of the most remarkable features of Christ's moral teaching, that He does not command us to regulate or control our unlawful desires, but pronounces it unlawful to have such desires at all." †

2. Jesus' severe condemnation of hatred of one's brother (Mt 5²²) springs from His deep sense of man's infinite worth (Study XXII.). To hate and despise one whom God so tenderly loves, and who has in him such infinite possibilities, is the most terrible of sins. How different was Jesus' own feeling towards men (Mt 9³⁶, Lk 19¹⁰).

Angry—some MSS. read "without cause"; the qualification is a true one (cf. Mk 3⁵, Eph 4²⁶), but Jesus was not in the habit of qualifying His statements (cf. Introd. III. (b), Study I. 1). *Raca*—an expression of contempt. "Trivial in appearance, the offence is deadly in Christ's eyes; it means contempt for a fellow-man, more inhuman than anger" (Bruce). *Thou fool*—"Raca expresses contempt for a man's head—you stupid!" Moreh expresses contempt for his heart and character—you scoundrel! The reckless use of such epithets Jesus regarded as the supreme offence against the law of humanity" (Bruce).

The judgement—the provincial court (2 Ch 19⁵). *The council*—the Sanhedrin, who could sentence to the death penalty. *Gehenna of fire*, i.e. is worthy of the awful penalty after death reserved for the worst offences, of hell itself. Jesus is not here legislating for actual practice; He is simply expressing His horror of hatred and anger by describing the penalties they really deserve.

3. The maintenance of a right relation with our fellow-men is of such primary importance, that it is to take precedence of all religious observances (Mt 5²³. 24).

V.²⁴. The religious observance is to be *interrupted* to fulfil the other duty. But, as Augustine points out, † this going must needs sometimes be "a going in heart, an hastening with the swift affection of love, not with the tardy motion of the feet." This is always Christ's teaching (cf. Mt 15⁵ 9¹³),—*reconciliation* before sacrifice, *filial affection and duty* before sacrifice, *mercy* before sacrifice (Bruce).

* Sanday in Hastings' *BD*, ii. C22.

† *Ecce Homo*, p. 140.

‡ *Treach*, Augustine on the Sermon on the Mount.

4. The danger and wickedness of despising or injuring the character and personality of another, Jesus again asserts with great solemnity in Mt 18^{6, 7, 10}.

5. How is it possible to control and regulate our passions, as well as our outward acts? It can be done only by becoming possessed by a stronger passion (cf. XL. 3),—love to Christ, and to those whose interests He identified with His own (Mt 25⁴⁰). *

LII.

Read Mt 6^{14, 15} 18^{15-17, 21-35}.

1. Love to men will, further, lead us to forgive the injuries and wrongs which they do to us. Nothing can be more plain than Jesus' declaration that God's forgiveness of us depends upon our forgiveness of others (Mt 6^{12, 14, 15} 18³⁵).

2. The extent of our forgiving, and the reason for it, are illustrated by Jesus in a parable (Mt 18²¹⁻³⁵). We are to forgive without limit, and we are to forgive because we have been forgiven.

V.²¹. Peter has not attained yet to the spirit of Jesus' teaching: the law of retaliation is with him still the rule, and forgiveness the exception. V.²⁴. *Ten thousand talents*, contrasted with *a hundred pence* (v.²⁸)—the infinite difference between the debt a man owes to God, and that which any fellow-man owes to him. V.²⁷. Such complete forgiveness seems improbable; but "improbability at this point is inevitable; for the humanity must be very unusual indeed, which is to sent the mercy of God" (Bruce). V.³⁵. *my heavenly Father*—the Father abhors above all things mercilessness, and Christ ("my") is in sympathy with Him i. this. *Unto you*—the chosen disciples. *From your hearts*—unreservedly, "and, in consequence, times without number, because the heart inclines that way" (Bruce).

Should not this parable make it easier for us to forgive? What, after all, are the injuries we are called upon to forgive? Think of them. "Take the injury that is most difficult for you to forgive, and measure it with that for which you yourself need to ask forgiveness from God, and say whether you ought to be implacable and resolved on revenge." †

3. Forgiveness is an act of strength, not of weakness. Sometimes acts are done in the name of "forgiveness," which are really the outcome of meanness and want of spirit.‡ Needless to say, these are not what Jesus commends.

4. It is to be noted that in Mt 18¹⁵⁻¹⁷, Lk 17^{3, 4} Jesus teaches that our duty towards those who wrong us—at any rate if they are

* Cf. *Eccle Homo*, chaps. xiii., xiv., pp. 141-143, 154-157.

† Dods, *The Parables of our Lord* (first series), pp. 142, 143.

‡ E.g. a boy is hit by another at school, and refuses to fight; it may be magnanimity, or it may be something else. Cf. Dods, *ibid.*, pp. 135-138; *Eccle Homo*, chap. xxii., pp. 278-281.

fellow-Christians—is not fulfilled merely by patiently suffering the wrong and bearing no grudge. He demands from us the harder task of seeking to bring the wrong-doer to a better frame of mind.

V.15. *Go*—a far harder task than waiting till he comes to us to ask our forgiveness. And we must go in no vindictive spirit, but in order to “gain” him. *Thou hast gained*, i.e. either (1) as a friend instead of an enemy, or (2) “thou hast saved one—and that a brother—from sin and ruin.” V.17, i.e. if the offender will not listen to the brotherhood of believers, he voluntarily puts himself outside the society; and though he is not to be treated unlovingly, it is no longer possible to have Christian fellowship with him.

LIII.

Read Mt 7¹⁻⁶ 5³³⁻³⁷.

1. Love will keep us from being critical of others (Mt 7¹⁻⁵).

Lk. (6³⁶⁻³⁸) immediately connects this precept about judging with the wider command to show benevolence and mercy. *Judge not*,—i.e. do not be looking out for faults, make the best of others, attribute to them the best motives. Mt 7². One great reason for refraining from judging is, that we may expect God’s treatment of us to correspond to our treatment of others (cf. Mt 6¹⁴⁻¹⁵ 18³⁵). If we make no allowance for others, we cannot expect God to make any allowance for us. V.3¹, *note* (*záppos*)=a small dry particle of wood, chaff, etc.; *beam* (*lógos*)=main beam. *Considerest not* (*ὃς ζαρὰνεις*), i.e. ignorest, dost not regard attentively our own faults demand careful consideration. One bad effect of judging the faults of others is that it blinds us to our own.

If we would but make the allowance for the actions of others that we expect to be made for our own, if we would but take into account their heredity, upbringing, inexperience, circumstances, temptations, and provocation, how often would condemnation change to pity and sympathy! If we would but attribute the best motives to those with whose doctrine and methods of work we disagree, how greatly would the Christian Church be freed from the dissensions which mar its influence!

2. The command not to judge by no means forbids the exercise of a wise discrimination (Mt 7⁶, cf. 7^{15, 16}).

In Mt 7⁶ Jesus recognises that there are those who are incapable of appreciating the holiest things in life. He bids His disciples discriminate such, and not expose their most sacred treasures to desecration. Experience alone can teach us in what particular instances this general rule can be applied.

3. Love will lead also to exact truthfulness and straightforwardness in social relations (Mt 5³³⁻³⁷). The older legislation forbade the breaking of an oath; Jesus demands from His followers such perfect truthfulness of heart, that their simplest word will be absolutely binding. All emphatic and immoderate language is prohibited. The principle stated in v.3⁷ condemns all exaggeration

* Cf. Ro 144.5.

in ordinary conversation for the sake of emphasis,—a habit by no means uncommon.

Does this command forbid the taking of an oath in courts of law? We have to remember Jesus' habit of speaking without qualification (Introd. III. (b), Study I. 1). While Jesus demands from His followers such inward truthfulness that their mere word shall be binding, it may be legitimate in public matters, when men have no means of knowing their truthfulness, to make the more solemn asseveration, in order to safeguard the rights of society.

LIV.

Read Mk 9³³⁻³⁷ 10³²⁻⁴⁵.

1. Love will lead us to spend ourselves in the service of others, to seek not our own but others' good. Since man's true life consists in loving (XXIV. 2, XLVII. 1), the true greatness of men is measured by the degree to which they have attained in love.

2. The disciples, failing miserably to enter into the great and solemn thoughts which filled the mind of their Master (Mk 9³⁰⁻³²), fell to quarrelling about rank and precedence. Jesus realising the gravity of the occasion, patiently and deliberately ("He sat down," Mk 9³⁵) sought to instil into their minds those new and revolutionary principles which at His death would be left in their sole keeping.

Vv. 35-37. "Our Lord goes to the root of this matter of greatness. He makes them put it to themselves what they meant by being greater one than another. He recalls them from what is worldly and ephemeral, from gradations of precedence and authority, to what constitutes the real greatness of a spiritual being, his favour in God's sight." *

V. 37. The thought may be of the unpretentiousness and humility of child nature,—those who welcome such a character, which Christ approves, welcome Christ Himself, i.e. are true and loyal disciples (Swete, Bruce, etc.); or of the *helplessness* of children, —the weak and helpless are the peculiar objects of the love and care of God (Mt 18¹⁰⁻¹⁴), and of Jesus (Mk 10¹³⁻¹⁶), hence those who serve and minister to such partake of the spirit of Jesus, and in this sense receive Him, and in receiving Him receive also God (Goulet on Lk 9⁴⁶⁻⁴⁸).

3. The lesson was not learned—we need not be surprised, for which of us after all these centuries has learned it yet?—and the same earthly ambitions called for its patient repetition (Mk 10³²⁻⁴⁵).

The incident should be studied only so far as it sheds light on vv. 42-44; it is on these that our attention must be concentrated. V. 45 will be studied later. V. 42. The law which prevails in the kingdom is to differ fundamentally from that which rules in earthly empires. Vv. 43-44. On no point in His teaching did Jesus lay greater and clearer emphasis than on the fact that in His kingdom *greatness lies in service* (cf., besides the verses studied to-day, Mt 23¹¹, Lk 22²⁶⁻²⁷). His teaching has undoubtedly borne fruit in the modern world; compare, for example, the life of Queen

* Latham, *Pastor Pastorum*, p. 356.

Victoria with the ideals of an Oriental monarch. On the other hand, it seems often to have hardly broken the crust of our ordinary habits of thought. Had these words but their way with us, how many of the ideals, dreams, and ambitions of our life would they not change?

LV.

Read Mt 5¹⁻¹².

1. In Mt 5³⁻¹² Jesus describes the character of members of the kingdom. Those who possess such a character are truly blessed (cf. Study XXIII. 3).

Blessed are the poor in spirit,—not always the actually poor (Lk. has “Blessed are ye poor,” 6²⁰), for outward poverty does not always beget the heavenly-minded spirit; as an old writer says, nothing involuntary can bless (*οὐδὲν τῶν ἀπορροισίων μακαριστὸν*). There is, now, the kingdom of heaven with all its blessings (cf. Studies XXII.—XXXV.).

Blessed are they that mourn, i.e. for sin and evil,—those who are weighed down by the terrible contrast between what *is* and what *ought to be*, and the sight of wickedness triumphant (cf. Ps 119¹³⁶); those who are earnestly yearning for the victory of right and the coming of God’s kingdom (cf. Lk 18⁷, Ro 8¹⁸⁻²⁵, Rev 6¹⁰ etc). For all such their very mourning is a ground of consolation, for it is itself a pledge of its own fulfilment; the desire is of God, and He will fulfil it. Further, “in so far as all kinds of sorrow tend to awaken reflection on the real good and ill of human life, and so to issue in the higher sorrow of the soul, the second Beatitude may be taken absolutely as expressing the tendency of all grief to end in consolation” (Bruce).

Blessed are the meek, i.e. the gentle, yielding, unresentful. Jesus says that they will inherit the earth. Yet they seem apt in this world to go to the wall; it is the pushing, self-asserting men who gain the earth. These, however, usurp it, they do not “inherit” it. Moreover, is it not the case that the men who go through the world with a humble filial spirit are those who most truly enjoy its good things? The possessor of large lands may have a heart too hard and bitter to enjoy them, while the humble stranger, who passes through them with his heart full of his Heavenly Father’s goodness, is able to drink in their beauties, and becomes the true possessor of them. Sometimes, also, even in the most literal sense, it is the meek who gain the earth,—“the meek of England, driven from their native land by religious intolerance, have inherited the continent of America” (Bruce).

V.6—the desire is the pledge of its fulfilment. We may pray with confidence: “We humbly beseech Thee, that, as by Thy special grace preventing us, Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect.” *τὴν δικαιοσύνην* = the righteousness, the righteousness of the kingdom.

V.7, a self-acting law of the moral world, cf. Mt 7², Lk 18¹⁴.

Blessed are the pure in heart—pure in every sense, especially in the sense of single-minded aim. It is not the intellect, but the heart that reveals God. “They shall see God,”—both now and hereafter; now, through a glass, darkly; then, face to face.

Blessed are the peacemakers. How sadly the world needs peace,—with its troubled consciences and minds distraught, its private feuds, its ecclesiastical divisions, its class hatreds, its commercial rivalries, its nations armed to the teeth. “Peacemakers have few friends; but they have their compensation,—God owns the disowned and distrusts as His sons” (Bruce).

V.10-12. “Meek,” “merciful,” “peacemakers,” and yet—*heroes*. Those who assert, at Christianity has emphasised the gentler virtues at the expense of the more

virile, forget this teaching and the long roll of Christian martyrs. Jesus recognises a blessing in suffering for righteousness. When we are overwhelmed by the mystery of the existence of evil, it is well to reflect upon this aspect of it. But for its presence, the world would have been without some of its choicest products. Human life would have been incomparably poorer without the army of martyrs and confessors.

2. "If ye know these things, BLESSED are ye if ye *do* them." "BLESSED are they that hear the word of God, and *keep* it" (Jn 13¹⁷, Lk 11²⁸).

LVI.

See Introduction, V. 3, VI.

* 1. Discuss the interpretation of the paradoxical sayings in Mt 5³⁸⁻⁴².

* 2. What is the teaching of Jesus with regard to Forgiveness? Must we forgive every injury? and under all circumstances? What does forgiving mean?

It would be an advantage if one member could bring a brief summary of one or other of the passages referred to in LII. 3, *note*. Another member should be asked to read the very suggestive article on "Forgiveness" in the *Student Movement* for May, 1902, and to bring up some of the interesting points raised in it.

3. What do you think to be the meaning of Mt 18¹⁵⁻¹⁷, and how far can this teaching be literally obeyed?

For the view of the author of *Eccle Homo*, see chap. xxiii.

4. What principle underlies Jesus' prohibition of swearing? Do you think that the prohibition extends to taking an oath in the Law Courts?

5. How would you explain Mk 9³⁷?

* 6. To what extent has Jesus' teaching about the greatness of service influenced modern life and ideals? In what respects has it as yet markedly not influenced them? (cf. LIV. 3, *small print*).

* 7. Review Jesus' teaching about our righteousness in relation to our fellow-men. What is the true Christian character?

NOTES.

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NOTES.

STUDIES LVII.-LXIII.

THE TEACHING OF JESUS ON SOCIAL QUESTIONS.

The Family, LVII.-LVIII.

Riches, LIX.-LX.

The Care of the Poor, LXI.

The Attitude of Jesus to Social and Political Questions, LXII.

In our time social questions have assumed a prominence and urgency they have never had before. Men's minds are profoundly agitated by them, and every kind of solution is being offered, even that of a complete overthrow of the present order of society. The Christian Church cannot escape these problems. Christians are bound to ask themselves, what would have been the attitude of Jesus towards such questions? Have we any guidance in His recorded teaching? The following six Studies are largely based on Professor Peabody's very instructive and interesting book, *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*. All who can should get the book and read it for themselves.

LVII.

Read Mt 19³⁻¹².

1. The teaching of Jesus with regard to the family demands our careful attention, because (1) He seems to have regarded it as a matter of so great importance that He departed from His usual practice of laying down only broad general principles, and gave explicit and emphatic laws regarding it; (2) there is a strong tendency at present, both in literature and in scientific socialism, to question the value of the family as a social institution, and to introduce a radical change in domestic relations.*

2. One thing that shows the high value which Jesus set upon the family, is the fact that He regarded it as "the nearest of human analogies to that Divine order which it was His mission to reveal."† He knew no higher name for God than *Father*, and His disciples were to be brothers to one another and to Himself (Mt 23^{8, 9}, Mk 3³⁵).

3. Another noteworthy fact is Jesus' treatment of women. The following passages are given for reference, but the working out of this point should not be allowed to interrupt to-day's study:—Lk 23¹ 81-3 438 712. 36-50 1038-42, Jn 11⁵, Lk 1127. 28 211-4, Mt 2613 281 9, Jn 427. 26 81-11 1927†. See Study LXIII. 1 (c).

4. In the passage for to-day's study the following points are to be noted:—

(a) The Pharisees' question is only to "tempt" Jesus (v.3), but He considers it important enough to receive a very serious answer.

(b) The great question at issue in the present day is, Is marriage a temporary contract, to be dissolved when the interests of either party demand it, or is it a fundamental relation of human life rooted in man's constitution, and by nature unchangeable? Jesus declares it is the latter (v.4, 6).§ Man and wife become one flesh. "Precisely as in the other relations of family life, of parent with child, of brother with brother, there may be alienation and even separation, but cannot be divorce, so is the relation of husband and wife."||

(c) The permission of divorce by Moses was only a concession to human weakness and sin (vv.7, 8).

(d) Jesus lays down His own law with regard to divorce (v.9). This verse will be studied more fully to-morrow.

(e) The stringency of this teaching amazes even the disciples, and they question whether, if marriage be so unbreakable a bond, it is expedient to enter into it (v.10).

* Cf. Peabody, pp. 139-144.

† *Ibid.*, p. 147.

‡ Cf. Peabody, pp. 147-148; Matthews, *Social Teaching of Jesus*, 96-101.

§ Peabody, pp. 131 ff.; Matthews, pp. 79-81.

|| Peabody, p. 157.

The same objection is made to-day; so strict a rule is declared to be impossible. But Jesus does not lower His lofty ideal; and the wonderful influence which this high ideal has exerted is seen in thousands of Christian homes. "If Jesus should come again, and consider the obvious effects of His teaching on the habits of social life, He would perhaps find no change so dramatic as that which is to be observed in the coherence and mutual devotion of the modern home."^{*}

(f) Jesus admits that, in some cases, it is better not to marry, but for very different reasons from that urged by the disciples (vv. 11, 12; v. 11 seems to refer to the third class mentioned in v. 12; "this saying" refers to the saying in v. 10). Reasons of temperament or heredity may stand in the way of marriage. Or a great spiritual work or claim may lead a man to forego marriage, as in the case of St. Paul. But Jesus says that this demand is not made upon all men, only upon those who are "able to receive it," i.e. who clearly realise what it involves and are inwardly convinced of its necessity and rightness. Nor does such an act of renunciation confer any superior sanctity any more than any other form of self-sacrifice (cf. Lk 17¹⁰, Study XLV. 3).

LVIII.

Read Mt 5²⁷⁻³².

1. So sacred in the eyes of Jesus is the marriage relationship, that He condemns a breach of the law of purity even in glance or thought (Mt 5²⁸).

What Jesus condemns is not the intrusion against our will of an evil thought, but the deliberate cherishing of it ("to lust"—with a view to lust, *τὸς τὸ ἐπιθυμῆσαι*).

2. Knowing the dangerous and fatal power of evil desire, Jesus reminds us that it is better to live a maimed life than to run the risk of having our life destroyed (Mt 5^{29, 30}).

"Right eye" and "right hand" are used symbolically. Better far to surrender certain experiences and pleasures of the world, to sacrifice the enjoyment of certain forms of literature and of art, than to run the risk of our moral character being injured, or the keenness of our purity being blunted.

3. In Mt 5^{31, 32} we have Jesus' legislation concerning divorce, with regard to the interpretation of which the keenest controversy has raged. The parallel passages are Mt 19⁹, Mk 10^{11, 12}, Lk 16¹⁸. It is possible here only to mention briefly some of the principal views that have been taken of the meaning of Jesus' words.

(a) To the absolute prohibition of divorce Jesus makes a single exception,—“saving for the cause of fornication.” It is to be noted that this exception is found only in Mt. (5³² 19⁹), not in Mk. or Lk.

(b) That Jesus intended to allow even this exception is denied by—(1) Roman Catholic commentators, who maintain that “putteth away” means only separation,

^{*} Peabody, p. 182.

not actual divorce; (2) some modern critics, who, pointing to the fact that the qualifying clause is not found in Mk. and Lk., regard it as an addition of the first evangelist. But as regards (1), a true exegesis seems to show that *ἀπολύειν* can mean only legal divorce; and (2) is an arbitrary dealing with the text.

(c) Hence it seems legitimate to conclude that Jesus allows a single reason for divorce—unfaithfulness—and does not prohibit the remarriage of the innocent party.* At the same time, He does not *command* divorce even for this reason; and His strong words in Mt 19b, and the strong body of opinion in the Church against divorce under any circumstances, have to be kept in mind.

(d) Some are inclined to extend the meaning of the exceptive clause, and treat it as embodying a general principle. Whatever constitutes a real and actual breach of the union may be regarded as a legitimate ground for divorce, *e.g.* drunkenness and ill-treatment ruining a home. But this seems a dangerous line of argument, and to open the door for precisely the thing Jesus was attacking (Mt 19b. 6).

We may quote the summing up of Professor Peabody: "Unwelcome the teaching of Jesus may be to many modern minds; impracticable or injudicious it may appear under modern conditions; 'overstrained morality' it may be, as Roman called it; but in its main features this teaching certainly cannot be called complicated or equivocal or obscure. . . . He teaches no prohibition of voluntary separation in case of conjugal failure; . . . but, except at the utmost for one cause,—and perhaps not even for that cause,—the mistake is one which, in the judgment of Jesus, involves a permanent burden. Marriage, when undertaken, must be regarded, not as a temporary agreement, but as a practically indissoluble union."†

LIX.

Read Lk 6²⁰⁻²⁶, Mt 27⁵⁷⁻⁶⁰, Mk 12⁴¹⁻⁴⁴.

1. The growth of social sympathies and the development of conscience with regard to social wrongs has awakened men to the startling extremes in society,—on the one hand, the reckless extravagance of the rich; on the other, the inability of the poor to gain even a sufficient livelihood. The question is asked, Ought these things to be? There are some who assert that the only remedy is a revolution in the social order, and the authority of Jesus has been claimed in support of the demand for the abolition of private property. Such passages are quoted as Lk 6²⁰⁻²⁶, and the story of Dives and Lazarus (Lk 16¹⁹⁻³¹).

Do these passages exalt poverty and condemn wealth as good and evil in themselves?

* So Gore, *The Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 68-74, 215-218. The Roman Catholic Church forbids the remarriage of even the innocent party. So do the Canons of the Church of England. But the Lambeth Conference of Bishops in 1888 allowed the admission to the sacraments and privileges of the Church of innocent divorced parties remarried under civil sanction.

† Pp. 151, 154. On the whole question, see Gore, *loc. cit.*; art. "Marriage" in Hastings' *BD*, iii. 273; Peabody, pp. 150-161; Matthews, pp. 86-94—in all of which references to other literature will be found.

2. From what we have already learned of Jesus' teaching, we should not expect to find Him dealing with purely economic questions. He was concerned less with men's circumstances than with themselves (Lk 12¹⁵). Recall the teaching of Studies XI., XV., XXIII., XXIV., XXXI., XXXII., XXXIX., etc. Jesus moved in the world of eternal realities; and so external and superficial a way of regenerating society as the abolition of private property could hardly have been His. To clearly understand this is as important as anything in to-day's Study. Only by trying to enter into and share Jesus' point of view shall we avoid falling into mistakes.

3. We find an illustration of His attitude of Jesus in the incident recorded in Mk 12⁴¹⁻⁴⁴. Money in itself seems to have no value in His eyes. His one standard of worth is the state of the heart. The story in Mk 14³⁻⁹ is also worthy of study in this connection. Others estimated Mary's act from a purely economic standpoint (vv.⁴⁻⁵); Jesus lifted it up into a region where money considerations have no place (vv.⁶⁻⁸), and so regarding it bestowed upon it the highest praise He ever gave (v.⁹).

4. That Jesus was not concerned, in the first place, with the abolition of wealth, is not only clear from the whole spirit of His life and work, but is supported by positive evidence. He numbered at least one rich man among His followers (Mt 27⁵⁷⁻⁶⁰). He did not demand from His disciples the surrender of their private possessions (Lk 8¹⁻³ 10³⁸⁻⁴² 43^{3, 39}; Mk 2^{14, 15}, etc.). He did not turn away from the requests of those in good position (Mt 8⁵⁻¹³ 9^{18, 19}).

5. Let us then make up our minds on this point: Is it true that Jesus was concerned less with men's wealth than with their health, less with their circumstances than with themselves?

LX.

Read Mt 6¹⁹⁻²⁴, Mk 10¹⁷⁻²².

1. While it is true that Jesus was concerned more with men's hearts than with their circumstances, it is nevertheless a fact that He spoke with great fulness and emphasis regarding riches, and His sayings demand our earnest attention. It may prove that they are more stringent than we are generally ready to admit.

2. Just because He was so intensely concerned about men's souls, He did not hesitate to demand the surrender of wealth when it

threatened to injure the soul's true life. He held the soul to be of greater value than the whole world (Lk 9²⁵), and thought it better to sacrifice an eye or a hand rather than imperil its safety (Mk 9⁴³⁻⁴⁸). Hence, when riches and the soul were in the balance, no measures could be too radical.

3. This is the point of view in Mt 6¹⁰⁻²⁴. Jesus knew the insidious influence of riches. A man's heart is inevitably attracted towards his treasure (v.²¹). To lay up treasure upon earth is to run the risk of losing the singleness of eye. Jesus knew that it was impossible to serve God and mammon. Here, if anywhere, our own experience will prove the best interpreter of Scripture.

4. We find this teaching practically applied in the story of the Rich Young Ruler (Mk 10¹⁷⁻²²). Jesus saw that one thing stood between him and the highest life. A heroic remedy was needed, and as a true physician Jesus did not hesitate to apply it. He demanded from the young man a great renunciation, that he might be able to enter into eternal life.*

5. How, then, would you sum up Jesus' teaching concerning riches? What demands did He make, and why? Is there not at the present day, when on every side there is a wild eagerness to become rich, and poverty is regarded as the worst of evils, an especial call to lay to heart this wise and noble teaching of Jesus?

"When one sees the way in which wealth-getting enters as an ideal into the very bone and marrow of our generation, one wonders whether a revival of the belief that poverty is a worthy religious vocation may not be the spiritual reform which our time stands most in need of. . . . We have grown literally afraid to be poor. We despise any one who elects to be poor in order to simplify and save his inner life. There are thousands of conjunctures in which a wealth-bound man must be a slave, whilst a man for whom poverty has no terrors becomes a freeman. Think of the strength which personal indifference to poverty would give us if we were devoted to unpopular causes. We need no longer hold our tongues or fear to vote the revolutionary or reformatory ticket. Our stocks might fall, our hopes of promotion vanish, our salaries stop, our club doors close in our faces; yet, while we lived, we would imperturbably bear witness to the spirit, and our example would help to set free our generation. . . . I recommend this matter to your serious pondering, for it is certain that the prevalent fear of poverty among the educated classes is the worst moral disease from which our civilisation suffers."†

* Other passages in which Jesus deals with the question of riches are Lk 16¹⁻¹⁵, 19³¹ 12¹³⁻²¹ (and with Mt 6¹⁹⁻²⁴ cf. Lk 12³³⁻³⁴); but it will be best to concentrate attention on the passages given for reading. Let us not miss their lesson.

† James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 368, 369.

·LXI.

Read Lk 12³³ 7²², Mt 25³¹⁻⁴⁶.

1. The poor were a special object of care to Jesus. His followers were mainly drawn from that class (Lk 6²⁰), and He regarded His message as specially intended for them (Lk 4¹⁸). He enjoined, and gave instructions regarding, almsgiving (Lk 12³³, Mt 6²⁻⁴).

2. Jesus knew, however, that money and bread were not the only needs of the poor. His great aim was to bring to them the glad tidings of the kingdom (Lk 7²² 4¹⁸).

3. In seeking to remedy the evils of the poor, Jesus chose simply to deal with individuals. He drew up no elaborate programme; He created no new organisation; He initiated no big social movement. It was this that puzzled John the Baptist (Lk 7¹⁸⁻²³). But Jesus was content that His work should be no other than that of healing and helping the needy who came to Him (v. ²²).

• It is interesting to note how the principles which govern modern social poor-relief have come into accord with this method of Jesus. "Two words," Professor Peabody says, "sum up the change of method advocated at the present time by scientific charity. The first word is classification; the second is anti-institutionalism." That is to say, every case must be investigated separately and receive individual treatment; and our hope of rescuing men must lie not in machinery or institutions, but in the transforming influence of sympathy and the contagion of personality. "The last word of scientific poor-relief is a reiteration of the teaching of Jesus."^{*}

4. Perhaps Jesus meant to teach us by the details of the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10³⁰⁻³⁷), wherein true care for the needy consists. The Samaritan showed his kindness by giving his *personal service*. Both the Priest and the Levite would, no doubt, have been willing to subscribe to a charity organisation. But the Samaritan was ready to interrupt his business, and give not only money, but sympathy, thought, tenderness, personal attention.

5. In Mt 25³¹⁻⁴⁶ (a passage which will come up for study again) Jesus declares the poor and needy to be His representatives (v. ⁴⁰). Our duty towards them is described in vv. ^{35, 36}. And Jesus seems to imply that this duty is so fundamental, that the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of it is a decisive test of a man's character (vv. ^{34, 41}).

6. What are the main points which we have learned to-day as to Jesus' teaching regarding care for the poor?

* Peabody, pp. 251-254.

LXII.

Read Mk 12¹³⁻¹⁷, Lk 12¹³⁻¹⁵ 7¹⁸⁻²³.

1. We read of a deliberate attempt on one occasion to draw from Jesus an opinion on political questions (Mk 12¹³⁻¹⁷). But He refused to be entangled in political controversy. His work lay in a different and higher sphere.

On the circumstances of this incident, see Study X. 4. Jesus' reply was, in the first place, an *argumentum ad hominem*. The Pharisees, as a matter of fact, accepted Caesar's sovereignty; they used his coins for ordinary purposes; therefore, they could not complain of being taxed.

But the real question remained, *Ought* Caesar to rule over the chosen people? The Pharisees would answer, No; they identified the kingdom of God with political freedom (Study X.). Jesus leaves the question as to the rightness of Caesar's rule unanswered; but He asserts that the kingdom of God is *independent* of such questions. The service of God is a matter of the soul.

2. Again, when asked to interfere in a question of property, Jesus proceeded "to translate the question of inheritance into a question of the spiritual life,"*—"Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness" (Lk 12¹³⁻¹⁵).

3. It is scarcely possible to overestimate the significance of the incident recorded in Lk 7¹⁸⁻²³ (Mt 11²⁻⁶). What John could not understand was the slowness of Jesus' working (cf. LXI. 3); where were the axe, the fire, the fan of which John had prophesied (Mt 3¹⁰⁻¹²)? He hoped that Jesus would *do* something, would bring about some great reform. *But Jesus declared His intention of adhering to His own method ("Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen"). That method was the *regeneration of the individual*. Jesus was determined to work from within. He believed that "the social order is not a product of mechanism, but of *personality*,"† and hence no transformation of society could take place except through the individual transformation of the persons who compose it.

4. Our Studies have shown us that the Gospel of Jesus is profoundly socialistic. We see this from two facts: (1) Its leading thought is that of "the kingdom of God," which is a social ideal; (2) its righteousness consists in love and service (Studies XLVII.-LIV.).

"No religion ever went to work with such an energetic social message, and so strongly identified itself with that message as we see to be the case in the Gospel.

* Peabody, p. 275.

† *Ibid.*, p. 102.

How so? Because the words "Love thy neighbour as thyself" were spoken in deep earnest; because with these words Jesus turned a *fight* upon all the concrete relations of life, upon the world of hunger, poverty, and misery; because, lastly, He uttered them as a religious, nay, *the* religious maxim."

5. On the other hand, in seeking to bring about the realisation of this social ideal, Jesus has two great lessons to teach us—

(a) He viewed all questions in the light of the Eternal. Above and outside of the changing problems of politics, economics, and civilisation, stands the unchanging eternal relation of the human soul to God,—“Render unto God the things that are God’s.”

(b) The method upon which ~~he~~ ^{he} relied was the regeneration of individuals and the transformation of character. He knew that there could not be a perfect society until there were perfect men. The method of Jesus is awfully slow, but it is the only method that is *sure*.

LXIII.

See Introduction, V. 3, VI.

* 1. What is the teaching of Jesus with regard to the family?

(a) Go through Mt 19¹⁻¹², making sure that the main points of the passage are clearly grasped (LVII. 1).^{*}

(b) What views have been taken of the meaning of Jesus’ teaching regarding Divorce?

(c) One member might be invited to bring a statement on Jesus’ treatment of women, as illustrated by the passages referred to in LVII. 3.

* 2. What is Jesus’ teaching about Riches? (see Introd. VI. 3).

* 3 What was the attitude of Jesus towards the poor?

* 4. What was the relation of Jesus to social and political questions? How far is His attitude an example for us?

Observe that the two parts of this question must be kept distinct. Jesus was a prophet, and the work of a prophet is to proclaim eternal principles. The resolute self-limitation of Jesus to His appointed task we have already seen (XVII. 1). But it falls to His followers to *apply* the principles. The principles mentioned in J. XII. 4 are to be our guide. But how if bad laws, degrading social conditions, and the existence of temptations to evil make the carrying out of them *impossible*? Are we not to seek to remove these hindrances?

* Harnack, *What is Christianity*, p. 98.

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STUDIES LXIV.-LXVII.

THE RELATION OF JESUS' TEACHING TO THE
REVELATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.*Jesus' Sanction and Confirmation of the Old, LXIV.**His Criticism of the Old, LXV.**The Relation of the Old to the New, LXVI.**The Sabbath, LXVII.*

We have now learned some of the principal features of the teaching of Jesus. • This teaching was given to those who had already received, as they believed, a Divine revelation. It is important, therefore, to discover what was the relation of the teaching of Jesus to this older revelation. Did it contradict it? Did it supersede it? Did it ratify it, and make it binding on all Christians? These questions violently divided the Early Church, and have not lost their interest and importance.

LXIV.

Read Mk 7⁶⁻¹³ 12²⁶, Mt 4⁴. 7. 10, Lk 18³¹ 24²⁵⁻²⁷. 44-46.

1. To Jesus the Old Testament was "the Word of God," "the commandment of God" (Mk 7⁸. 9. 13); in it God spoke (Mk 12²⁶). From its teaching He drew strength and knowledge to overcome temptation (Mt 4⁴. 7. 10). In it He found direction and support for the fulfilment of His mission (Lk 18³¹ 24²⁵⁻²⁷. 44-46).

2. The use which Jesus made of the OT is further illustrated in the following passages:—Mt 5¹² 8⁴. 11 9¹³ 11¹³. 14. 23 12³⁹⁻⁴² 13¹⁸⁻¹⁹ 17¹¹. 12 19³⁻⁶ 22³⁴⁻⁴⁰ 23². 23. 35 24³⁷⁻³⁹ 27⁴⁶ (= Ps 22¹), Mk 10¹⁹ 11¹⁷ 12¹⁻¹². 35-37, Lk 4²⁴⁻²⁷ 16²⁹⁻³¹ 17³² 22^{8,37}, to which must be added the passages referred to in Studies LXV.—LXVII.

If time be short, it will be best to consult only the references in bold type, or even to omit this paragraph altogether. Our object in this Study is to learn the place which the OT had in the life and thoughts of Jesus; and we shall gain more by meditating carefully upon the passages given at the head of the Study than by hastily consulting many references.

3. "For us the supreme sanction of the Old Testament is that which it received from Christ Himself. It was the Bible of His education and the Bible of His ministry. He took for granted its fundamental doctrines about creation, about man and about righteousness, about God's Providence of the world and His purposes of grace through Israel. He accepted its history as the preparation for Himself, and taught His disciples to find Him in it. He used it to justify His mission, and to illuminate the mystery of His cross. He drew from it many of the examples and most of the categories of His Gospel. He reinforced the essence of its law, and restored many of its ideals. But, above all, He fed His own soul with its contents, and in the great crises of His life sustained Himself upon it as upon the living and sovereign Word of God. These are the highest external proofs—if indeed we can call them external—for the abiding validity of the Old Testament in the life and doctrine of Christ's Church. What was indispensable to the Redeemer, must always be indispensable to the Redeemed."*

Let the truth of each of these statements be tested by the texts previously referred to.

* G. A. Smith, *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, p. 11.

LXV.

Read Mt 5^{21, 22, 27, 28, 33, 34, 38, 39, 43, 44} 17²⁴⁻²⁷ 19^{7, 8}, Mk 7¹⁹.

1. We have seen that Jesus looked upon the revelation of the OT as the Word of God, and relied upon it as the guide and strength of His life. At the same time, we find that this was compatible with a very bold and free interpretation and criticism of it.

2. In Mt 5²¹⁻⁴⁸ Jesus supersedes the old law by a new one,—“Ye have heard that it was said . . . but I say.” To some of the precepts He gives a new and deeper meaning than they were originally intended to bear (vv. ^{22, 28, 34}). Others He condemns as imperfect, and abrogates (vv. ^{38, 39, 43, 44}).

Vv. ^{38, 43} clearly show that not all of the precepts of the OT are binding upon Christians. Some of its teaching was an accommodation to the ideas of those who were not able yet to receive the fuller revelation. Failure to recognise this led both the Roman Catholic Church and the Puritans to plead the rigours of the OT as a sanction for severity, cruelty, and persecution. That the Mosaic legislation was in part a concession to human infirmity, is asserted by Jesus in Mt 19^{7, 8}.

3. By His teaching in Mk 7¹⁻²³, Jesus abolished the whole Mosaic legislation regarding matters of food. Such ceremonial distinctions He regarded as a matter of indifference. St. Mark points out the far-reaching significance of this new teaching in his comment, “This He said, making all meats clean” (v. ¹⁹).

It is true that to many of the ritual requirements of the Mosaic law Jesus conformed during His lifetime (Mt 8⁴ 17²⁴⁻²⁷, cf. 23^{2, 3}). Yet He touched the leper, regardless of ceremonial pollution (Mt 8³), and He paid the half-shekel to the Temple (Ex 30¹¹⁻¹⁶) as a matter not of necessity, but of expediency (Mt 17^{26, 27}).

4. Let us make clear to ourselves Jesus’ treatment of the OT illustrated in the passages studied to-day. May these particular instances be regarded as implying a general principle? In other words, is it legitimate to conclude that the OT is always to be interpreted, judged, and, when necessary, corrected in the light of the New?

LXVI.

Read Mt 5¹⁷⁻²⁰, Mk 2¹⁸⁻²³.

1. How are we to explain this apparent inconsistency of Jesus in His relation to the Old Testament? Sometimes He seems to cite it as the authoritative Word of God, sometimes to criticise and modify its teaching.

2. In Mt 5¹⁷⁻²⁰ Jesus makes an explicit statement of His relation to the law, which may help us to a solution of the seeming contradiction.

The warning, "Think not that I came to destroy," implies that there was that in Jesus' teaching and conduct—as, indeed, we have seen there was (Study LXV.)—which might suggest that Jesus meant to destroy and abrogate the law. He declares that this is not His purpose; He has come to "fulfil" the law and the prophets.

What did Jesus mean by "fulfilling" the law? It might be said that He fulfilled it by perfectly obeying it. He certainly did this. But the opposite of this meaning of "fulfil" is not "destroy" (*καταλῦσαι*), but "transgress" (*παράλαμβάνειν*). The contrast in this verse is not between disobeying and obeying,—the act of a subject; but between repealing and confirming,—the act of a lawgiver. Hence we must conclude, that by "fulfil" Jesus means "*carry to full completion, bring to full perfection.*" That this is the true meaning is confirmed by the examples which Jesus cites of His fulfilling of the law (vv. 22. 28. 34. 39. 44).

Hence Jesus can go on to say (v. 18), that not the smallest portion of the law will pass away till it has been accomplished,—not that it will never pass away, but not until it has served its purpose. His teaching is not more lax than that of the Pharisees, but far more strict and searching (vv. 19. 20). Only while they *extended* the law by adding innumerable new precepts, He *intensified* it by giving it a deeper spiritual meaning (vv. 22. 28 etc.). *

3. Jesus, then, fulfilled the law by reissuing it in a higher and perfect form, and by developing in their fulness the principles latent in it. This explains how He could set His seal upon the OT and at the same time pass beyond it. The OT was an authoritative revelation of God, but it was incomplete. It must pass into and be absorbed in the new and higher revelation which Jesus brought.

Thus the Levitical ceremonial legislation served a purpose in keeping the people separate and holy, but in the light of Jesus' higher and more spiritual law of holiness it was no longer needed, and passed away (Mk 7¹⁷⁻²³). The law imposing a restraint upon retaliation was absorbed in the Christian law of love (Mt 5^{38. 39}). These are only single instances. Jesus does not illustrate His principle in all its details; He has left it to His followers to apply it for themselves (cf. Study LXV. 4, Introd. III. (b)).

* Wendt, *Teaching of Jesus*, vol. ii. p. 26.

4. The *newness* of His revelation is asserted by Jesus in Mk 2¹⁸⁻²², and He declares that it is impossible that it should clothe itself in old forms, but must create new forms for itself.

Vv. 18-20 will be studied later, and time should not be spent upon them; what concerns us to-day is the two parables in vv. 21-22. Commentators are not agreed regarding the interpretation of the details of the parables. It should be observed that the two results of the patching process mentioned by Lk 5³⁶ are both different from that given by Mk. (v. 21), with whom Mt 9¹⁶ agrees. But the general meaning is plain. The new religion of Jesus could not be fettered by the old regulations. The new *spirit* of love could not be confined within legal enactments. If the disciples of Jesus were to fast, it must be the outcome of an inward necessity, not obedience to an outwardly imposed law. Lk 5³⁹ adds a third parable, in which Jesus acknowledges the difficulty which any one trained in, and accustomed to, the old must find in accepting the new. For the reception of Jesus' teaching young and fresh natures were needed; publicans, like Levi, received it more readily than Pharisees (Mk 2¹³⁻¹⁷).

LXVII.

Read Mk 2²³⁻²⁸ 31-6.

1. Very interesting to study is Jesus' attitude towards the Jewish Sabbath. This was the great question on which He constantly came into collision with the Jews (*e.g.*, besides the passages for to-day's study, Lk 13¹⁰⁻¹⁷ 14¹⁻⁶, Jn 5¹⁻¹⁷ 9¹⁻⁴¹).

2. Let us examine the incidents in which Jesus was accused of violating the Sabbath.

In Mk 2²³⁻²⁸ the charge made against the disciples was that of working on the Sabbath; according to the refinements of legalism, "plucking" the ears was equivalent to reaping, and rubbing in the hands (Lk 6¹) to threshing. Jesus, in reply, shows by an illustration from the OT (vv. 25, 26), that when a ceremonial requirement clashes with a moral—in this instance, the need of supporting life—the former must give way. He then states the general principle (v. 27). "The Pharisees made the day not a boon, but a burden; not a day given by God to man in mercy, but a day taken from man by God in an exacting spirit."* But Jesus declares that the Sabbath was given for man's good; and hence it may be controlled and administered by the representative man, the Head of the race (v. 28, cf. Mt 12⁸⁻⁹).

In Mk 31-6 the question is the one so often raised (see § 1),—that of Jesus' right to heal on the Sabbath. Jesus replied, first, by an *argumentum ad hominem*,—the Pharisees would rescue a sheep, of how much more value was a man (Mt 12^{11, 12}); secondly, by going to the root of the matter, and showing that "beneficent action is never unseasonable, being of the essence of the kingdom of God, and hence as permissible and incumbent on the Sabbath as on other days" (Bruce on Mt 12¹², Mk 3⁴). To Jesus to refrain from doing good was to do evil (Mk 3⁴); moreover, His words were a rebuke to the Pharisees, who at that time were plotting to "kill" (v. 6),—which was better, His action or theirs? The Pharisees' exaltation of the ceremonial above the moral, of Sabbath observance above humanity, aroused in Jesus a holy anger (v. 5).

* Bruce, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 74.

3. How, then, would you describe Jesus' attitude towards the Sabbath?

(a) What false views regarding it did He condemn?

(b) What positive teaching did He give concerning its observance?

"*The Sabbath was made for man,*" i.e. to promote his highest good. Put in Jesus' view, man's highest good is the growth of his true life (Studies XXIII. XXIV.). Hence the Christian practice of setting apart one day in seven for the worship of God and the care of the soul is an inestimable boon and privilege to be jealously preserved.

STUDIES LXVIII.—LXXIII.

THE CONDITIONS OF ENTERING THE KINGDOM.

Repentance, LXVIII.

Receptivity, LXIX.

Renunciation, LXXI., LXXII.

The Difficulty and the Ease of Entering, LXXIII.

LXVIII.

Read Mt 4¹⁷ 18³ 21²⁸⁻³² 22¹¹⁻¹⁴.

1. Jesus, carrying on the preparatory work of the Baptist (Mt 3²), prefaced His announcement of the kingdom with a call to Repentance (Mt 4¹⁷). Repentance (*μετανοία*) means a *change of mind*. It is a turning away from man's natural thoughts to receive Jesus' teaching regarding the kingdom; and hence cannot but be an indispensable condition of entering. Its full meaning can be determined only in the light of all that Jesus taught concerning the kingdom.

"If God be a Father, then repentance will mean ceasing to regard Him under any lower aspect; if man be a being of infinite importance as a moral subject and son of God, then repentance will mean realising human dignity and responsibility; if the righteousness of the kingdom be spiritual and inward, having reference not merely to outward acts, but to motives, then the summons to repentance will be a call not merely to a life for moral ends, but to self-criticism, so as to discern between true and false righteousness."*

2. Hence repentance is not *only* an initial act; it is a sustained attitude and enlarging experience. Jesus can say to His disciples late in His ministry, "Except ye *turn*, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 18³).

Jesus repeats the call to repentance in the following passages:—Mt 11²¹ 12⁴¹, Lk 5³² 13³ 15⁷ 10 24⁴⁷, Mk 6¹²; but time need not be spent in looking up these references.

3. In the parable of the Two Sons (Mt 21²⁸⁻³²), Jesus enforces the necessity of *sincerity* in repentance. It is a matter of doing, not of saying. The same thought is expressed in Mt 7²¹.

Note the difference of attitude,—“I go, sir (*εγώ, κύριε*),” polite, filial, eager; “I will not (*οὐ θέλω*),” rude, unmannerly. But the real question was, “Whether of the twain *did the will* of his father?”

4. In the parable of the Wedding Robe (Mt 22¹¹⁻¹⁴), Jesus solemnly warns us that only those who have a right disposition can find a place in the kingdom of God.

The parable is an appendix to that of the Wedding Feast (Mt 22¹⁻¹⁰), which we shall study again. We are probably to understand that, in accordance with Oriental custom, the man had been offered a robe provided by the king. In any case, his fault was that he thought that *anything would do*. Jesus saw that some might interpret His free and unlimited invitation (v. 9) as meaning that they might enter without a

* Bruce, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 85.

radical change of heart, and He speaks this parable as a warning. "Does this man's conduct signify anything to ourselves? How idle it seems to ask the question. What is commoner than this self-complacency, this utter blindness to the fact that God is holy, and that holiness must therefore be the rule everywhere? what is commoner than the feeling that we are well enough, that we shall somehow pass muster, that as we mean to take our place among the heavenly guests we shall surely not be ejected? How hard it is for any of us fully to grasp the radical nature of the inward change that is required if we are to be meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." *

5. State to yourself, in your own words, what you have learned regarding repentance from the passages studied to-day.

LXIX.

Read Mk 1¹⁵ 2¹⁷ 10¹³⁻¹⁶, Lk 12³².

1. Jesus did not merely repeat the Baptist's call to repentance (Mt 3², cf. Study LXVIII. 1), but added the new and significant words, "and believe in the Gospel" (Mk 1¹⁵). His message was the Gospel, *i.e.* good tidings. All that was necessary was that men should believe in the good news. The great condition of entering the kingdom is faith or trustful receptivity.

Jesus' message of good tidings was, "The kingdom is here; make it welcome." "To comply with this invitation, and to receive the kingdom as offered, is to believe; faith needs no better definition; it consists in spiritual receptivity." †

Even repentance is hardly to be regarded as a separate and distinct condition of entrance; it is something involved in faith itself. Receiving the kingdom and turning away from all that is opposed to it are but two sides of the same act. Each is impossible without the other.

2. That the one requirement made by Jesus was willingness to receive the kingdom, is shown by the fact that He addressed His message to moral and spiritual bankrupts, who could fulfil no other condition (Mk 2¹⁷, Lk 19¹⁰ etc.).

The radical change produced by faith in Jesus' message is shown in the story of the woman that was a sinner (Lk 7³⁶⁻⁵⁰, Study XXX.). Such results are not surprising; for to receive the kingdom with its teaching about God, about man, and about righteousness, is to fix our lives on a new centre, and thus to make all things new.

3. In Mk 10¹³⁻¹⁶ Jesus plainly lays down that the one condition of entering the kingdom is to *receive it* as a little child. V.¹⁶ is an inexhaustible mine.

* Dods, *The Parables of Our Lord* (first series), p. 227.

† Bruce, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 95

"Jesus means that children have the same unpretentious receptivity in reference to the kingdom of God which is characteristic of them generally, since they have not yet any other possessions on which their hearts are set, nor any other qualities on which they can at all pride themselves" (Wendt). On *δέχεται* ("receive," v. 15) Bengel has the note "*offertur enim*" (for it is offered).

4. In keeping with this, Jesus speaks of the kingdom as a *gift*. In Lk 12³² He assures His disciples that their seeking for the kingdom (v. 31) will certainly be successful; and the reason for this is, that success does not depend upon their own efforts, but is the Father's gift.

5. Let us make sure that we absorb the teaching of the passages studied to-day. The truth they contain is one of the greatest and most fruitful in the Christian religion.

LXX.

See Introduction, V. 3, VI.

* 1. What place did the Old Testament have in the thoughts and life of Jesus?

Perhaps the most helpful plan will be to go through the passage quoted in LXIV. 3. sentence by sentence, proving each statement by evidence from the Gospels.

* 2. To what extent does Jesus seem to criticise and alter the Old Testament?

Examine the instances given in Study LXV., viz. Mt 5^{21, 22, 27, 28, 33, 34, 38, 39, 43, 44} 17²⁴⁻²⁷ 19^{7, 8}, Mk 7¹⁹, and decide in each case how Jesus dealt with the older legislation.

* 3. How would you explain this apparent inconsistency? How far may we regard Jesus' treatment of the Old Testament as a guide in our attitude towards it? (LXIV. 3, *end*; LXV. 2, *small print*; LXV. 4).

* 4. Examine Mt 5^{17, 20}. In what sense did Jesus "fulfil" the law?

5. Discuss the meaning and application of the parables in Mk 2^{21, 22}.

6. What did Jesus teach negatively and positively regarding the observance of the Jewish Sabbath?

It will be best to confine the United Study for this week to a review of Studies LXIV.-LXVII., which form a complete whole, and afford plenty of material. Studies LXVIII. and LXIX. will be taken next week.

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LXXI.

Read Lk 9⁵⁷⁻⁶², Mt 5²⁹⁻³⁰ 7¹³⁻¹⁴.

1. Since the call of Jesus is to make the kingdom the first good (Mt 6³³), it is impossible but that acceptance of it should involve the renunciation of all that would stand in the way of this. This thought has a large place in the teaching of Jesus.

2. Thus we find Jesus offering to those who sought to enter the kingdom an inexorable alternative (Lk 9⁵⁷⁻⁶²).

Lk 9⁵⁷⁻⁶² is well summarised in the chapter heading in AV,—“Divers would follow Him, but upon conditions” (Plummer). The first case is that of *inconsiderate impulse*, the second that of *conflicting duties*, the third that of a *divided mind* (Bruce). V. 57, “a certain man,”—Mt. 10:21: “son of man” (819). Lest he should act on a passing feeling of enthusiasm, Jesus reveals to him what discipleship really involves (v. 58).

Vv. 59, 60. “Leave the dead,” *i.e.* the spiritually dead. Jesus’ saying seems a harsh one. It may be that “Suffer me to bury my father” meant “to wait until my father dies”; Wendt quotes a case of a young Turk who said to a missionary that he must bury his father before he could make a tour in Europe, *i.e.* wait till his father died.* Or the long time spent on Jewish funeral ceremonies might have involved too great delay. We do not know the circumstances. But Jesus’ teaching is plain. “There are critical moments in our inner history, when to postpone the immediate call, is really to reject it” (Edersheim). Note how Jesus’ call corresponds word by word with the man’s request; *go—go; bury—publish abroad; father—Kingdom; my—of God*.

Vv. 61, 62. The man’s thoughts cling to the old life; but Jesus demands a service that is free from regrets.

3. Thus also Jesus demands that everything that is a hindrance in the higher life must be unhesitatingly renounced (Mt 5^{29, 30}; cf. Mt 18^{8, 9} 19¹², Study LVII. 4 (f)).

4. He knew well that “narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life” (Mt 7^{13, 14}). *The gate is strait, and Jesus resolutely declined to widen it.* To enter by it demands an earnest effort, (ἀγωνίζεσθε εἰσελθεῖν διὰ τῆς στενῆς θύρας, “strive to enter,” Lk 13²⁴).

* Teaching of Jesus, ii. 70.

LXXII.

Read Mt 10³⁴⁻³⁹, Lk 14²⁵⁻³⁵.

1. Jesus saw clearly the tumult of emotions His teaching would arouse in the world. The righteousness He introduced glowed with so white a heat that He knew it would kindle the fiercest hostility. This searching issue would sever even the closest natural ties. For such a death struggle between good and evil He was fully prepared. He bids His disciples be ready also (Mt 10³⁴⁻³⁶, Lk 12⁴⁹⁻⁵³).

Observe the terms in which Jesus describes the consequences of His mission,—*πῦρ, μάχαιρα, διαμερισμός* (fire, a sword, division). Are not these strange expressions to use? Why should He have anticipated such results?

2. In view of the magnitude of the issue at stake, He demands from His followers an unlimited devotion (Mt 10³⁷⁻³⁹, Lk 14²⁵⁻³⁵). In our easy and less strenuous time the demand has an exaggerated air; but to Jesus, and to many of His followers since, the words bore a literal meaning.

Lk 14²⁵ 27. Jesus warns the unthinking crowds that to follow Him, hated of men and destined for the cross, involves the surrender of all that is dear (v. 26), and the acceptance of that which is painful (v. 27). *Hateth* (v. 26) cannot possibly, in the lips of Him who spoke Mt 15⁴⁻⁹ 19⁶, mean "bear ill-will towards"; it is explained by the last words in the enumeration, "his own life also." A man must hate, i.e. renounce, shun his natural life, and with it all natural ties, in so far as they keep him from following Christ. On Jesus' habit of speaking without qualification, cf. Study L. I, Introd. III. (b). V. 27. Wendt points out that "taking up one's cross" has acquired in Christian usage a very diluted meaning; if we would realise the full force of Jesus' saying, we must translate in our own idiom, "whosoever follows Me not to the scaffold cannot be My disciple."*

In vv. 28-32 Jesus illustrates by two parables the serious consideration which the decision to become a disciple demands. In the first, "Jesus appeals with characteristic tact to one of the most sensitive feelings of human nature,—shrinking from ridicule" (Bruce). In the second, we are perhaps not intended to ask whom or what the two kings represent (cf. Introd. III (c)), but only to learn the general lesson that we must show the same forethought in becoming disciples that men show in undertaking worldly enterprises. For an attempt, however, to find a meaning in the details of the parable, see Godel's commentary.

Vv. 34-35. Salt is "the emblem of the sharp and austere savour of holiness" (Godel). The disciples' renunciation must never cease; for without this spirit of self-devotion they lose all their usefulness and worth.

3. May we not regard it as an honour that Jesus believed in men enough to thus appeal to the heroic in their nature?

* *Teaching of Jesus*, ii. 60.

4: Jesus demands an unqualified renunciation.^{*} Yet He was no ascetic. It was the absence of asceticism that distinguished His ministry from that of the Baptist (Mt 11^{18, 19}). We must give the sayings studied to-day their fullest force; but we must never in interpreting them lose sight of the fact that Jesus' message was one of "good tidings" and gladness (cf. Mt 13⁴⁴, "in His joy," etc.), and that His great work was to reveal *the Father in heaven*.

LXXIII.

Read Lk 14¹⁵⁻²⁴, Mk 10²³⁻²⁷.

1. We have seen that to enter the kingdom is a matter so simple that a child can do it, and yet at the same time terribly hard. The kingdom is a great good offered to men as a gift, and yet they are not willing to receive it.

2. This paradox is illustrated in the parable of the Great Supper (Lk 14¹⁵⁻²⁴). It shows at once the freeness and goodness of the invitation, and the preoccupation of the invited guests which makes them indifferent to it.

This parable has many points of resemblance to that of the Wedding Feast (Mt 22¹⁻¹⁰), but the occasion and the main lesson of each was different. This parable of the Great Supper was uttered as a warning in reply to the self-satisfied remark of a man who was piously congratulating himself on the future blessedness he anticipated (Lk 14¹⁵). The Gospel is represented as a free invitation to the gladness of a feast,—an invitation, moreover, made with the greatest liberality and cordiality (vv. 16, 21, 23). The only condition of accepting it is *to be willing to come*. If some are excluded (v. 24), the fault is their own. Strange to say,—so strange that in ordinary life it would be unnatural,—some of the invited guests are so preoccupied with other interests that they have no desire to accept the invitation. But what would be incredible in human society, Jesus knew to be a matter of too common occurrence in relation to the kingdom. The truth of this last sentence may be seen by examining the excuses offered.

3. Hence, while knowing His message to be one of grace, Jesus could exclaim, "How *hardly* shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God" (Mk 10²³). All earthly goods, and especially great riches, are likely so to engross men's affections that it will be immeasurably hard for them to surrender them for the blessings of the kingdom,—so hard as to be *impossible* (vv. 25, 27).

^{*} Attempts have been made to soften the saying in v. 25 by (a) reading *κάμilon* (found in a few late MSS.) = "a strong rope," instead of *κάμηλον*, or (b) supposing a "needle's eye" to be a popular name for a very narrow gateway. But (a) has no MS. authority, and makes the saying less striking without lessening its difficulty;

and there is no evidence that the usage presupposed by (b) existed in our Lord's time. V.²⁷ shows that Jesus meant something not merely improbable, but *impossible*.

4. "*Impossible*,—but not with God" (v.²⁷). What man in his unaided strength cannot do, the grace of God can do for him. Jesus believed that "the power of God converts impossibilities into facts."

5. The question has been much debated recently in Germany, whether the kingdom is a Gift or a Task (*Gabe* or *Aufgabe*),—a boon supernaturally bestowed upon men, or something to be achieved by human effort.* We have seen that it is both. It is undoubtedly a gift (Study LXL.); it no less certainly calls for human effort (Study LXXI.). Professor Stevens well sums up the question when he says, "It is a gift whose appropriation and use constitute man's highest life-task."

* Cf. Stevens, *Teaching of Jesus*, p. 67.

STUDIES LXXIV.-XCI.

THE TEACHING OF JESUS CONCERNING HIMSELF.

King, LXXIV.-LXXV.

Son of Man, LXXVI.-LXXIX.

Son of God, LXXX.-LXXXIII.

Saviour and Redeemer, LXXXV.-LXXXVIII.

Risen and Present Lord, LXXXIX.

Judge, XC.

What did Jesus teach concerning His own person? No question can be more important. On the answer to it will depend our view of what the Christian religion is. Let us approach the problem reverently, patiently, and with an open mind. Some of the Studies will demand painstaking investigation and concentrated thought; but if any subject is worthy of honest work, this is.

LXXIV.

Read Mk 8²⁷⁻³⁰, Lk 19²⁹⁻⁴⁰, Mk 14⁶⁰⁻⁶⁴.

1. We have seen that the burden of Jesus' teaching was the advent of the kingdom of God. The great question now presents itself,—Did He claim to be its King? Did He claim to be the Messiah towards whose coming the whole history of Israel pointed, and the hopes of all the people turned?

2. There can be no doubt that at the beginning of His ministry Jesus did not openly proclaim Himself as the Messiah. But this can easily be explained. We have seen (Studies X., XV.) how radically Jesus' conception of the kingdom differed from that of His contemporaries. The last thing that He would want would be to be taken for Messiah in the popular sense. And hence He could assert His claim only when no doubt was possible as to the sense in which He made it.

3. At the same time, the evidence that Jesus did claim to be the Messiah is irresistible, and the fact is now generally acknowledged. In the first place, there is the great confession by the disciples at Caesarea Philippi (Mk 8²⁷⁻³⁰).

The importance of the incident is emphasised by all three evangelists. The opposition against Jesus had been growing, and He more and more withdrew Himself to be alone with and train the inner circle of His disciples, on whom all His hopes now rested (Mk. 8²⁷). He must anxiously have wondered whether they would acknowledge Him as the Christ, or, like the rest of the people, reject One who so contradicted their expectations. He committed the matter to God in earnest prayer (Lk 9¹⁸), and then sought to ascertain the attitude of the little band towards Himself. On Peter's frank confession of Him as the Christ, His heart was filled with joy and gratitude to His Father (Mt 16¹⁷). As Keim says, we hardly know which to wonder at most,—the faith of the disciples, which could thus rise above popular opinion and prejudice, and acknowledge that which was outwardly helpless and abased to be truly lofty and Divine; or the personality of Jesus, which, in spite of such outward circumstances, could win from the disciples so lofty an expression of the effect produced on them by His ministry.* With this confession of His disciples Jesus was satisfied; He did not wish the fact to be proclaimed to those who were not spiritually fitted to receive it (Mk 8³⁰).

4. In His final entry into Jerusalem Jesus allowed Himself to be publicly acknowledged as the Messiah (Lk 19²⁹⁻⁴⁰). Misunderstanding as to the nature of His Kingship was no longer possible, for He was going to His death. The time for silence was past, and He openly asserted His right to the nation's homage (cf. vv.³⁹⁻⁴⁰).

* *Jesus of Nazara*, iv. 263.

"A narrative such as the entry of Christ into Jerusalem has simply to be expunged, if the theory is to be maintained that He did not regard Himself as the promised Messiah, or wish to be recognised as such" (Harnack).^{*}

5. Finally, in His trial before the Sanhedrin, Jesus, in answer to the high priest's question, asserted His claim to be the Messiah. It was on this charge that He was condemned to death (Mk 14⁶⁰⁻⁶⁴). He repeated the same claim before Pilate (Mt 27¹¹), and it was the charge that was written upon the cross (Mt 27³⁷).

"It is evident that Christ clung firmly to the title (*i.e.* of King), and attached great importance to it. . . . This assumption of royalty was the ground of His execution. Was there nothing substantial in the royalty He claimed? *Did He die for a metaphor?*" †

6. Observe the occasions on which Jesus claimed to be the Messiah. He did not make the claim often, but when He did make it, He made it deliberately and unmistakably.

7. Jesus' claim to be the Messiah is confessed in the title by which His followers have ever since spoken of Him,—CHRIST, which is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *Messiah*.

LXXV.

Read Mt 10^{32, 33}, Mk 10^{29, 30}, Mt 5¹⁷ 12⁴⁰⁻⁴².

1. Jesus claimed to be a King. But what sort of a King? The answer must be,—*A King corresponding to the kingdom which He proclaimed.* Recall some of the chief characteristics of the kingdom (Studies XV. 1, 5; XVI. 1; XIX. 4; XX.). Reflect upon Jesus' view of the Messianic kingdom, and then consider what is involved in His claim to be the Messiah and the inaugurator of *such* a kingdom. See the quotation from *Ecce Homo* in XV. 5.

2. The idea of Messiah is not one which moves us strongly nowadays. It seems a Jewish ideal, a far-away matter of history and of the past. This is both true and untrue. The name Messiah does belong to the past, because, as Harnack says, "Jesus left the idea far behind Him, and put a meaning into it which was too much for it to bear." ‡ The Jewish Messiah was absorbed in the Christian Christ. But that which underlay Jesus' claim to the Messiahship remains, and every man has to settle accounts with it,—His claim to *authority*, to be the Founder and Lord of the kingdom of God.

^{*} *What is Christianity*, p. 130.

† *Ecce Homo*, p. 26.

‡ *What is Christianity*, p. 141.

3. As King, Jesus is entitled to demand uncompromising allegiance to Himself (Mt 10^{32, 33}, Mk 10^{29, 30}, etc.). In Mt 5^{10, 11} He speaks of suffering for His sake in the same breath with suffering for the sake of the eternal law of righteousness. Long familiarity is apt to blind us to the force of these and many kindred sayings.

4. As King, too, Jesus declares His right to issue laws (Mt 5^{17, 22}, Studies LXV. LXVI. 3). This, if anything, is the function of a king. He asserts His superiority to the wise men and prophets of the old dispensation, and to the Temple, the centre of Jewish religion (Mt 12^{6, 40-42}). He is convinced that His legislation is final (Mt 24³⁵), and that men's destiny is determined by their attitude to His words (Mt 7²⁴⁻²⁷).

5. In yesterday and to-day's Studies we are not concerned with a question of purely historical interest. No more practical question meets us in life than this: Do you acknowledge Jesus to be King?

LXXVI.

Read Mk 9¹¹⁻¹² 14^{21, 61, 62}, Mt 16¹³⁻¹⁶.

1. When we read the Gospels, we find that Jesus speaks of Himself most frequently by a name which is never given to Him by others, and which does not occur in the other books of the NT (except Ac 7⁵⁶),—*the Son of Man*. The expression occurs in the Synoptic Gospels some eighty times, and was used by Christ on probably forty distinct occasions (Driver). Jesus must have had some deep reason for choosing this name as His usual self-designation. If we can but learn what that reason was, we shall have advanced a long way towards determining what He taught about Himself.

It is not surprising that the meaning of this self-designation of Jesus, the Son of Man, should have become, in recent years, one of the most keenly debated of problems. A whole literature has grown up around it.

2. The main question at issue is this: (a) Is the meaning of the designation to be found by an analysis of the expression itself? *i.e.* did Jesus intend by it to express in some way His relation to humanity? Or (b) Is the designation merely a *title*, like the "Son of David," commonly used to designate the Messiah? In other words, the extreme positions taken are—(a) that the words have a *personal* meaning disclosing Jesus' thought about Himself, and

never designate the Messiah; (b) that the words bear a purely *official* sense, and mean simply the Messiah and nothing else.

3. An examination of the Gospels seems to bring out the following facts:—

(a) Jesus twice uses the phrase as referring to a well-known person whose actions had been foretold (Mk 9^{11, 12} 14²¹); in these passages it seems probable that the Son of Man can be none other than the Messiah.

(b) In Mk 14^{61, 62} the high priest asks Jesus if He is the Christ (*i.e.* the Messiah). He affirms that He is, and goes on to assure the high priest that he will one day see the Son of Man coming in glory, *i.e.* such glory as befits the Messiah. There seems hardly any doubt that here “the Son of Man” = “the Messiah.”

(c) On the other hand, in Mt 16¹³⁻¹⁶ the disciples do not yet understand that the Son of Man means the Messiah. For Jesus had on several previous occasions referred to Himself as the Son of Man,* and does so here in the very question by which He seeks to find out whether they believe Him to be the Christ.

4. These facts would appear at least to suggest that Jesus used the Son of Man as a name for the Messiah, but that it was not *generally* understood in this sense. If this was the case, Jesus was able by the use of this name to *veil* His claim to the Messiahship, until He had removed the misconceptions which existed in the minds of the people regarding the Messiah (cf. Study LXXIV. 2).

To some it may appear that to-day's Study yields little immediate spiritual help. But if we remember the importance of the enquiry on which we are engaged (cf. para. 1), we shall be willing to have patience. It will be well for each to examine the above passages carefully for himself, and consider how far they support the conclusions suggested. We shall continue the Study next week.

LXXVII.

See Introduction, V. 3, VI.

* 1. It will be best to confine the United Study this week to the consideration of the conditions of membership of the kingdom (Studies LXVIII.–LXXIII.). What are these, and how are they related to one another? (see Introd. VI. 3).

* *E.g.* Mt 9⁶ 12^{8, 32}.

* 2. What is the meaning of Repentance? Why is it a necessary condition of membership? In what sense is it not a finished but a *continuous* act?

One member might be asked to bring a report on the passages referred to in Study LXVIII. 2, *small print*, showing the place which Repentance had in the teaching of Jesus.

3. Discuss the three instances recorded in Lk 9⁵⁷⁻⁶². What were the character and circumstances of each enquirer, and what was the meaning of Jesus' reply?

* 4. Consider the demands made by Jesus in Mt 10³⁴⁻³⁹, Lk 14²⁵⁻³⁵. What do they involve? What do they not involve? (cf. Study LXXII. 4).

5. State as fully as possible the evidence which shows that the kingdom is a Gift? What goes to show that it is at the same time a Task? How would you reconcile the two ideas?

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LXXVIII.

Read, Dn 7^{13, 14}, Mk 14⁶², Mt 24^{30, 31}.

1. "The Son of Man" is an expression which occurs in the OT; and, knowing the place which the OT had in the thoughts of Jesus (cf. Study LXXIV.), we might expect to find in it some clue to the meaning of the term as used by Him. Cf. Introd. II.

2. In Dn 7^{13, 14} we have a significant passage, which, as we shall see, beyond question fixed itself in the mind of Jesus. We may well dwell upon a passage upon which He must have long meditated.

It is probable that in Dn 7¹³ the expression "one like unto a son of man" did not refer, in the intention of the writer, to a *personal* Messiah, but to glorified Israel; the writer himself so interprets it in vv. 18, 22, 27: the kingdom is given to "the saints of the Most High." The kingdom of God is represented by a *human* form, as the other kingdoms were represented by bestial forms (vv. 3-7). But, as we know for certain from the Book of Enoch, the expression in v. 13 came to be interpreted by the Jews as referring to a personal Messiah. And if the kingdom was to be ushered in by a personal Messiah, the question whether the words refer to the kingdom or to the King is not very important; the characteristic attributes of the former must be embodied and realised in the latter.

3. That this passage sank deep into the mind of Jesus, is clear from Mk 14⁶², Mt 24^{30, 31}. The echo of the language is unmistakable. It is perhaps also found, though less distinctly, in Mt 13⁴¹ 16^{27, 28} 19²⁸.

"There must have been a moment in the experience of Jesus when the text in Daniel, so often referred to, suddenly shone forth upon Him as the guiding star of His career; and if only a record of this incident had been vouchsafed to us, much that is dark would have been made clear. . . . To those His experience will not be altogether foreign, to whom, in some great spiritual crisis, a word of God, detaching itself from the rest of Scripture, has been given as a pledge of the Divine choice, to be kept for ever."†

4. It would seem probable, then, that the title was suggested to Jesus by Dn 7^{13, 14}. It would further seem likely that He used it to describe Himself as the bringer in of the Messianic kingdom; which agrees with the facts cited in LXXVI. 3 (a) and (b). We thus have further proof that Jesus regarded Himself as the Messiah, and attached importance to the claim (Studies LXXIV.-LXXV.). The question remains, *Why* did He choose this particular title out of all others?

* The portion of the book in which the passages referred to occur is generally supposed to have been written during the first century B.C.

† Stalker, *Christology of Jesus*, p. 78.

This question will be more fully considered to-morrow. Meantime, we may note that the *human* image of the Messianic kingdom in Dn 7¹³ is peculiarly appropriate to that kingdom which was founded, not, like the kingdoms of the world, on⁴ brutal force, but on the essentially human qualities of Righteousness and Love.

5. Those who have time may put to the test for themselves how far the interpretation of the phrase as standing for *Messiah* yields a suitable meaning in the passages in which the expression occurs, viz. Mt 8²⁰ 9⁶ 10²³ 12⁸. 32. 40 13³⁷. 41 16¹³. 27. 28 17⁹. 12. 22 19²⁸ 20¹⁸. 28 24²⁷. 30. 37. 39. 44 25³¹ 26¹². 24. 45. 64, Lk 6²² 9²² 12⁴ 17³⁰ 18⁸ 19¹⁰ 21³⁶ 22⁴⁸ 24⁷. The references in bold type illustrate the main classes of passages.

LXXIX.

Read Ps 8, Mk 2²⁷. 28, Mt 8²⁰ 11¹⁹, Lk 19¹⁰.

1. We have seen that there is much that would lead us to think that Jesus used the title "the Son of Man" as a name for the Messiah. But it is difficult to suppose that it was to Him a *mere* title. There must have been some reason for His choosing it, and adhering to it so consistently.

2. It is further to be noted that the distinct references to Dn 7¹³, i.e. the identification of the Son of Man with the triumphant kingdom there referred to, all occur towards the *close* of Jesus' ministry (see references in LXXVIII. 3). When Jesus first used the expression (cf. passages for to-day's Study), it was with reference to His earthly life, and not to the consummated kingdom spoken of in Daniel; and it is probable (cf. LXXIV. 2, LXXVI. 4) that Jesus did not wish His hearers to interpret His use of the name as a claim to the Messiahship. He desired by it to convey some idea of His Person apart from that of Messiah.

3. Hence it is not surprising that many leading scholars should agree in believing that Jesus intended by His use of the name to express in some way *His relation to humanity*. Jesus was at once the Son of *Man*, as sharing in all man's life, and *the* Son of Man, as holding a unique position among men.

Thus Sanday: This title "at the centre is broadly based upon an infinite sense of brotherhood with toiling and struggling humanity, which He who most thoroughly accepted its conditions was fittest also to save. As Son of God, Jesus looked upwards to the Father; as Son of Man, He looked outwards upon His brethren, the sheep who had no shepherd." *

So Driver: "The title designates Jesus as *the* man in whom human nature was most fully and deeply realised, and who was the most complete exponent of its capacities, warm and broad in His sympathies, ready to minister and suffer for others, sharing to the full the needs and deprivations which are the common lot of humanity,

* Hastings' *BD*, ii. 623b.

but conscious at the same time of the dignity and greatness of human nature, and destined ultimately to exalt it to unexampled majesty and glory."*

So also Neander, Baur, Weiss, Westcott, and very many others, quoted by Driver.

4. Hence "even if it be allowed that the primary reference in every saying about the Son of Man be to Messiahship, yet, on the other hand, every one of them gains in point and power, if this under-sense be also remembered."† Consider how this is so in the passages given for to-day's Study.

5. The expression "Son of Man" occurs in Ps 84, and it seems not unlikely that this Psalm was an object of close study to Jesus. It brings out powerfully the two sides of human nature, which Jesus constantly emphasised in His teaching regarding the Son of Man,—man's lowliness and man's dignity.

6. We have seen that there is a great deal to be said for each of the alternatives mentioned in LXXVI. 2. *And the two are not necessarily exclusive or contradictory.* For Jesus' conception of the Messiah was essentially a universal and human one. It was in virtue of His connection and sympathy with the human race that He was fitted to be Messiah.

7. Try to represent to yourself what Jesus meant to suggest regarding His Person when He chose as His favourite self-designation the title "Son of Man."‡

LXXX.

Read Mk 3¹¹ 5⁷ 14⁶¹ 62, Mt 16¹⁶ 27⁵⁴.

1. "The Son of Man" was Jesus' chosen designation for Himself. A second title closely associated with His name is "the Son of God," which, unlike the former, is most frequently found on the lips of others. The interpretation of the meaning of this title goes to the root of the question as to the Person of Christ. Let us examine the evidence of the Gospels with as unbiassed a mind as possible.

2. We have to bear in mind, in the first place, that the Son of God is an expression and conception that occurs in the OT (cf. Study II. 2). It was applied to—(1) angels, *e.g.* Job 1⁶ 38⁷; (2) the first man, Lk 3³⁸; (3) the Hebrew nation, *e.g.* Ex 4²²; (4) the

* Hastings' *BD*, iv. 587b.

† Stalker, *Christology of Jesus*, p. 78.

‡ For further treatment of the subject, see Stevens, *The Teaching of Jesus*, chap. vii.

Israelitish king, e.g. 2 Sam 7¹⁴, Ps 2^{6.7}. "From these examples it will be seen that the Old Testament idea of sonship to God is that of special nearness to Him,—of special endowments or privileges conferred by Him." *

3. It follows that it would be quite natural for the Jews, especially under the influence of Ps 2^{6.7}, to apply the title "Son of God" to the Messiah, as standing in a specially close relation to God. Hence we are hardly justified in arguing that the title "Son of God," when applied to Jesus by His contemporaries, had *necessarily* any more than an *official* sense, i.e. that He was the Messiah.

4. Thus, when the title was given to Jesus by unclean spirits (Mk 3^{11.57}), it cannot be said with certainty that it meant more than that they recognised Him to be the Christ.†

5. In Mk 14^{61.62} (=Mt 26^{63.64}) it is certainly possible that in the second half of his question the high priest was quoting words attributed to Jesus (cf. Mt 27⁴³); but it is at least equally possible (cf. para. 3) that he himself identified the Messiah with the Son, and that the two clauses mean the same thing. In this case Jesus' answer shows only that He claimed to be Messiah. On the other hand, the account in Lk 22⁶⁶⁻⁷¹ makes the two questions distinct.

It is true that Jesus was accused of blasphemy (Mk 14⁶⁴); but that this lowly carpenter should have claimed to be the divinely sent Messiah, the goal of Israel's history, might have been sufficient blasphemy in their eyes.

6. In the same way, Peter's confession in Mt 16¹⁶, the second clause of which is reported only by Mt., need not *necessarily* mean more than that he acknowledged Jesus to be Messiah (cf. Lk 9²⁰, Mk 8²⁹). At the same time, the emphatic use of the word "living" might suggest that Peter saw in the phrase a new and deeper meaning.‡

7. Finally, the exclamation of the centurion in Mt 27⁵⁴, if, as is probable, the man was a heathen, can hardly have meant more than that he saw in Jesus a supernatural person, perhaps a hero or demigod ("a son of God," RV marg.).

To-day's study may have seemed to yield little immediate profit; but it has cleared the way for further study, and the subject is so important that a careful examination of every passage is necessary.

* Stevens, *NT Theology*, p. 58.

† This is the interpretation of the phrase given by the evangelist in Lk 4⁴¹.

‡ S. Sanday in Hastings' *BD*, iv. 574b; Bruce, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 185.

LXXXI.

Read Mt 3^{16, 17} 17⁵ 24³⁶.

1. We have seen that in the lips of others the title Son of God, as applied to Jesus, had probably an *official* meaning. But the question remains, What did the title mean to Jesus?

2. We must recall what we learnt in Studies II., III. The great work of Jesus was to reveal the Father. The consciousness of God as His Father lay at the very root of His whole life and ministry. The blessings which He enjoyed, and which He called men to enter into, were summed up in the Father's love and care (Studies XXII.—XXV.). In this sense Sonship was to Jesus nothing official, but an intimate personal relationship of mutual understanding and love.

3. Here, however, a remarkable fact demands attention. While Jesus reveals the Father for all men, He always distinguishes between His own Sonship and that of His disciples. He speaks of "my Father" (Study III. 3, *note*) and "your Father" (Study IV. 1, *note*), but never once of "our Father."

We cannot offer any texts for meditation in this portion of our Study; it is on the significant absence of texts that meditation will prove helpful to-day. If we reflect on how inevitably any ordinary teacher would say "our Father" in addressing his fellow-men, we shall realise how full of meaning is the distinction made by Jesus. This distinction is the more remarkable in view of the fact that the expression "our Father in Heaven" seems to have been one in general use among the Jews as a name for God.* As Dr. Stalker says, the fact, if true, "is a cardinal one, and it is useless, in the face of it, to assert that obviously His Sonship must be the same as ours."†

4. Mt 24³⁶ is a remarkable passage, in which Jesus assigns to the Son a unique place in the matter of knowledge. This is positive evidence for the conclusion reached in paragraph 3.

"From the point of view of anti-Arian controversies, this verse may seem to teach a low doctrine as to Christ's divinity; but considered as an authentic utterance of Jesus concerning Himself, its significance is great."‡

5. A further question that will reward careful meditation is, What meaning was conveyed to Jesus by the Divine revelation vouchsafed to Him at His Baptism and Transfiguration (Mt 3¹⁶⁻¹⁷ 17⁵). On such a question dogmatism is out of place, but the words afford much food for reverent thought.

* Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, pp. 184-190.

† *Christology of Jesus*, p. 105.

‡ Bruce, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 185.

(a) That the Divine message assured Jesus, in the first place, that He was the divinely chosen Messiah is probable. It was given to Him at His Baptism, when He was entering upon His Messianic career, and was immediately followed by the Temptation, which related to the nature of His Messianic work (cf. Study XV. 4); at the Transfiguration, it would encourage Him to proceed in His chosen course in spite of outward failure and the prospect of a shameful death (cf. Lk 9²²⁻²⁸).

(b) But the words "beloved" and "in whom I am well pleased" show that it had also a more intimate and personal meaning. Jesus' consciousness of God as His Father began long before His baptism (Lk 2⁴⁹). The voice from Heaven must have opened up before Him a vision of that life of perfect obedience to, and perfect trust in, His Father, which henceforward He was to perfectly realise.

* (c) Whether the revelation meant even more than this, is a question yet to be considered.

LXXXII.

Read Mk 12¹⁻¹². 35-37.

1. We study to-day two passages which call for careful examination. How much weight is to be attached to them is a question much disputed.

2. (a) The parable of the Wicked Husbandmen and the Heir (Mk 12¹⁻¹²). In this Jesus describes Himself as standing in a unique relation to God, different from, and far above, that of all the prophets.

The vineyard had become a recognised symbol of Israel itself, as the covenant people.* Observe the painstaking care bestowed upon Israel described in v. 1.

In v. 6 Jesus claims to be the Son and Heir of God. He distinguishes Himself absolutely from the prophets; there are many servants, there can be only one Son. This much seems altogether beyond dispute. How much does it signify? Remembering that we are dealing with a parable, and how cautious we must be in transferring human analogies to Divine relationships (cf. Introd. III. (c), *last para.*), we may not feel justified in contradicting the assertion of those who say that Jesus meant only to describe Himself as the Messiah, and thus standing in a unique relation to God. But the more we meditate upon the words, the more, perhaps, they will seem to bear a larger meaning. May we not maintain that "it is nature and relationship, not mere official dignity, that underlies this title, and that is implied in the parable"? †

3. (b) The Lord's unanswerable question. In asking this question, Jesus seems to desire to point out that "the Messiah is not 'son of David' in the same sense in which other members of his lineage are spoken of as sons." ‡

* Cf. Ps 80⁸, Is 51-7 etc.

† Dods, *The Parables of Our Lord* (first series), p. 203.

‡ Sanday in Hastings' *BD*, iv. 573a.

The Scribes laid great importance on the fact that the Messiah was to be David's son; and they expected that he would succeed to David's throne, and be, like him, a great earthly monarch. Jesus shows that in the 110th Psalm, which was generally interpreted as relating to the Messiah,* the Messiah is spoken of as David's lord, i.e. as being no mere descendant and successor of David, but as far surpassing him in position and dignity. Jesus cannot have meant in v.³⁷ to deny His natural descent from David;† but He suggests that He bore to David also another and very different relation. It is true that Jesus is here speaking in the language of suggestion rather than of direct statement; but His words do raise the questions relating to His person. If He be not merely David's son, "whose son is He?" (Mt 22:42).

LXXXIII.

Read Mt 11²⁵⁻³⁰.

1. We have left till the end the great and wonderful passage in which Jesus gives utterance to the close and intimate relationship subsisting between Himself and the Father (Mt 11²⁵⁻³⁰). It calls for careful meditation.

We have already considered this passage in Study III. 4, and we must recall what we there learnt. We study it to-day for the light it casts upon the self-consciousness of Jesus.

2. In v.²⁷ Jesus definitely distinguishes Himself from other men as *the Son*. This confirms the conclusions reached in LXXXI. 3, 4.

Harnack, perhaps the best-known German critic, says, "For our part, we must be content with the fact that this Jesus who preached the Kingdom and knowledge of self, nevertheless named Himself, and Himself alone, as *the Son of God*."‡

3. The Sonship which is here described consists in an exclusive *knowledge* of the Father. Between Him and the Father there subsisted a perfect mutual understanding and intimacy such as no one had ever before enjoyed. With marvellous love and assurance Jesus invites the whole world to come and share this experience (vv.²⁸⁻³⁰), which He alone could make possible, for them (v.²⁷).

"A scientific examination of the Gospels, whatever else it brings out, brings out this, that the root-element in the consciousness of Jesus was a sense of Sonship to the Divine Father, deeper, clearer, more intimate, more all-embracing and all-absorbing, than ever was vouchsafed to a child of man."§

4. The relationship here described is an ethical one, a relationship of mutual understanding, love, and trust. This has led many

* Edersheim, ii. 720, 721.

† What is Christianity, p. 129.

‡ Cf. Ro 1³, etc.

§ Sanday in Hastings' *BD*, iv. 575b.

writers to assert that Jesus' Sonship was *only* ethical. But the question immediately presents itself, Is such an ethical relationship possible apart from a community of nature? Could so unique and transcendent an experience be possible to one who was merely human?

"It does not follow in the least, that because the Sonship of Jesus was ethical, it was not metaphysical. On the contrary, the ethical always rests on the metaphysical; ethical unity becomes less possible the farther any two beings are metaphysically separated from each other. The sympathy between a beast and a man is imperfect, because they are metaphysically so far apart; on the contrary, the union of man and woman is capable of such completeness because, though between them there exists the difference of sex, yet both partake in the same human nature."*

"We must admit that the exegetical result, in the case before us, raises a problem respecting the person of Jesus Christ, with which the mind cannot decline to deal. . . . It is open to the radical theologian to say that the positing of a metaphysical union with God, as the basis of the unique consciousness and character of Jesus, is a subsequent explanation which Paul and John have given. But it is an explanation, and the mere assertion that Jesus' consciousness was 'purely human' is *not*."†

5. Each man must ponder this great passage for himself, and seek to get a glimpse of what Jesus meant when He uttered these wonderful words.

LXXXIV.

See Introduction, V. 3, VI.

* 1. What is the evidence that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah? Is it conclusive?

* 2. What was involved in that claim, *i.e.* what was it that Jesus claimed, when He claimed to be the Messiah? (LXXIV. 1, 5; LXXV.). Has that claim any practical and vital interest for us to-day?

* 3. (a) Why is it important to understand the meaning of the title "Son of Man"? (LXXVI. 1).

(b) What two views have been taken of its meaning? (LXXVI. 2).

(c) What is to be said in favour of each? (LXXVIII. LXXIX.).

(d) How is it possible to accept both? (LXXIX. 6). Try and see how it was just because Jesus was Son of Man in the sense indicated in LXXIX. 3 that He could be Messiah in the sense in which He understood that office (LXXV. 1).

* Stalker, *Christology of Jesus*, p. 106.

† Stevens, *NT Theology*, pp. 63, 64.

* 4. What possible meanings might the title "Son of God" bear? What meaning do you think it probably bore when applied by others to Jesus? (LXXX.).

* 5. In what sense did Jesus regard Himself as the Son of God? Consider Mt 3¹⁷ 17⁵ 11²⁵⁻³⁰.

* 6. Discuss the interpretation and bearing on the Sonship of Jesus of Mk 12¹⁻¹² and 12³⁵⁻³⁷.

* 7. Try to sum up briefly what we have so far learned of Jesus' teaching regarding Himself.

Every question here is important, and the Study is unavoidably long. But if the work were divided beforehand among the members (Introd. VI. 5), and each were to state his conclusions briefly and concisely, the Study should not prove unmanageable.

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LXXXV.

Read Lk 19¹⁰, Mk 10^{17, 18, 21-12}.

1. In Lk 19¹⁰ we have the statement of Jesus that His mission was to seek and save the lost. With this we may compare the Scripture passage which He regarded as fitly describing His ministry (Lk 4¹⁶⁻²¹). To realise how much is involved in the salvation which Jesus offered to men, we must recall the results of Studies XXII.-XXXV.

2. Here arises a very important question which it will do us good to reflect upon to-day, though we cannot offer any individual saying of Jesus as a starting-point. Jesus regarded human nature as infected with an evil taint (Study XXV.), and from this He proposed to save men. Was He entirely free from that taint Himself? Was He a sinless Saviour?

Christians have always believed that He was. This conviction rests not so much on direct statements, as upon the irresistible impression made by the whole life and words of Jesus. (a) Recall the character of the members of the kingdom. Did not Jesus, in claiming to found and rule the kingdom, claim to possess that character in perfection? (b) It has been the best men in all ages who have most deeply realised the barrier of transgression and unworthiness that separated them from God; especially is this true of the Hebrew prophets and the Christian apostles.^{*} No one ever had a greater knowledge of the human heart, or a greater sense of the Divine holiness, than Jesus; yet no word ever falls from His lips that suggests a sense of short-coming or failure to fulfil the Father's will. Consider what this implies. If Jesus were the imperfect man described in Mt 11²⁷, with all that it involves, possibly have been that of one who was in the least degree conscious of a breach in the unity between the Father and Himself?

There is one passage in which Jesus refers to Himself, which seems to contradict this belief,—Mk 10^{17, 18}. Perhaps the easiest explanation is that Jesus, who could not bear to have the highest and holiest words of human speech cheapened by being used in a light and conventional sense,[†] desired to recall the young Ruler to a sense of how great and sacred a thing goodness really is ("Why callest thou Me good?"),—something that belongs in its absolute sense to God, and flows to all men from Him. As man, Jesus is Himself dependent on the Father (cf. Mt 12²⁸, Jn 5^{19, 30}). But He leaves altogether on one side the question whether, after the young Ruler has learned what real goodness is, he would not be right in asserting that in the life of Jesus the Divine goodness was fully and perfectly manifested. As Dr. Forrest says, "the only possible interpretation is that which represents Jesus as on this sole occasion disowning a perfection which His entire life before and after shows that He claimed."[‡]

^{*} Cf. the language of the Psalmist (Ps 51), Isaiah (6⁵), Job (42⁵⁻⁶, cf. 1⁸), Paul (Ro 7²⁴, 1 Ti 1⁵), John (1 Jn 1⁸), etc.

[†] Cf. the way in which He at once took up and corrected the pious exclamation of the guest at the supper table, and showed him what the words really involved (Lk 14^{15th}). In Is 32⁵ one characteristic of the Messianic kingdom is that mere conventional titles are to give place to reality (cf. G. A. Smith in "Expositor's Bible," *Isaiah*, vol. i. pp. 257-261).

[‡] *The Christ of History and Experience* (3rd ed.), p. 33.

3. We have already studied Mk 2¹⁻¹² (Study XXIX.). We are concerned now with the claim of Jesus in v.¹⁰. The noteworthy thing is that, when the Pharisees assume that He meant not merely that He knew God would forgive but that He pardoned the man on His own authority, and therefore accuse Him of blasphemy (v.⁷), He does not say that they were mistaken, but rather offers a proof of that authority by a visible miracle.

In connection with the saving work of Jesus the great question suggests itself, What relation did His death bear to that work? This we shall consider in the next three Studies.

LXXXVI.

Read Mk 2²⁰ 8³¹⁻³³ 9⁹⁻¹³ 30-32 10³²⁻³⁴.

1. The first fact which strikes us with regard to the death of Jesus is the large and absorbing place which it occupied in His thoughts.

This fact should make us cautious about accepting the assertion, commonly made, that the apostles gave to the death of Jesus a far more prominent place than it occupied in His own mind.

2. At the very outset of His ministry the dark shadow fell across His path, and in the midst of the glad joy of His early disciples (Mk 2¹⁸⁻¹⁹) He spoke of sad days when the bridegroom would be taken away (v.²⁰).

It would seem very strange, were we not used to it, that One who deliberately addressed Himself to so mighty a task as the setting up of the kingdom of God in the world, should thus calmly anticipate His own death. The saying evidently made a deep impression, and is recorded by all three evangelists (Mt 9¹¹, Lk 9²²).

3. But it was not until He had won from His disciples an assured acknowledgment of Himself as the Messiah, that He felt that they were ready to receive so strange and startling an announcement. It was after the great confession at Caesarea Philippi that He began plainly to tell them of His approaching passion (Mk 8²⁷⁻³⁴). Thereafter He constantly referred to the same subject (Mk 9⁹⁻¹³ 30-32 10³²⁻³⁴ 12⁷⁻⁸ 14⁸, Lk 12⁵⁰ 13³³ 17²⁵). Observe how the disciples received the announcement (Mk 8³² 9¹⁰⁻³² 10³²).

4. Except in two brief but significant passages, which we shall study to-morrow and the next day, Jesus says little with regard to the meaning and purpose of His death. But this is not to be wondered at. How could He explain the meaning of His death

when He could not lead His disciples to believe even in the fact? (see references above).

5. Yet though they have no immediate doctrinal significance, the passages for to-day's Study deserve careful pondering. Surely the fact itself is strange and mysterious enough. *The Messiah to die!*—No wonder the disciples could not take it in.

6. Moreover, even in these first plain announcements of the Passion, there is one fundamental lesson as to the meaning of the Cross, which must serve as the basis of all further study. Jesus teaches "that His death was the natural effect of *fidelity to righteousness in an evil world.*"* This is clear from His reply to Peter when he sought to turn Him from His purpose (Mk 8³³), and from His call to His disciples to tread in His footsteps (v.³⁴). The death of Jesus is a constant reminder of the deep and marvellous discord that has broken up the harmony of the world, and, *at the lowest estimate*, it is "the highest revelation of the Divine life in man in conflict with the evil of the world."†

LXXXVII.

Read Mk 10⁴²⁻⁴⁵.

1. The ambitious request of the sons of Zebedee (Mk 10^{32ff.}) led Jesus to set forth in clear and emphatic terms the law of service which was to prevail in His kingdom (see Study LIV. 3); a law which was pre-eminently exemplified in His own person, the Founder and Head of the kingdom (v.⁴⁵).

2. In connection with His mission of service Jesus speaks of His death (v.⁴⁵). Two things He clearly tells us regarding it. (a) It was the voluntary gift of His love,—He came to *give* it. (b) It was a pre-determined and necessary part of His vocation,—as Son of Man (*i.e.* as Messiah, cf. Study LXXVIII. 4) He *came* to thus give His life.

Let these facts be clearly got hold of. In that mission of service which Jesus came into the world to accomplish, His death was to hold an important place. Somehow it was to benefit "many." Even if we are puzzled as to *how* it should do so, let us dwell upon the fact that Jesus believed that it would have this result. Jn 15¹².

3. We have still to consider the strange and striking words, "a ransom for many" (λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν). We must remember that

* Bruce, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 231.

† Caird, *Evolution of Religion*, ii. 191.

Jesus is speaking in figurative language, and that the words give us at most only a hint regarding the meaning of His death; as Dr. Bruce says, "in this profound saying our Lord has bequeathed to His Church a theological problem rather than supplied her with a full solution."* Cf. *Intro.* III. (c), *last para.*

λύτρον is "the price paid for redeeming." Jesus' death is the price at which "many" will be redeemed. Note the use of the preposition *ἀντὶ*—"instead of," stronger than *ὑπέρ*—"on behalf of."

4. What the Psalmist says that no man by his wealth can do for another (Ps 49⁷⁻⁹), Jesus declares that by His death He will do for many. By His death He will liberate those whose lives have been forfeited, or who are in bondage and captivity. If we still ask *how* His death will do this, the passage before us does not tell us. But that it did have the effect, we know from the testimony of His followers (Tit 2¹⁴, *λυτρώσεται*; 1 Pe 1¹⁸, *ἐλυτρώθητε*; Heb 9¹², *λύτρωσιν*). Jesus leaves us with a great thought; and if it goes beyond our understanding, let us be content to wonder for a while and lose ourselves in its depths.

LXXXVIII.

Read Mt 26²⁶⁻²⁹, 1 Co 11²³⁻²⁵, Mk 14²²⁻²⁵, Lk 22¹⁷⁻²⁰.

1. The second great occasion on which Jesus spoke of the meaning of His death was during the Last Supper. Of His words on that occasion we have four accounts.

The accounts in Mt. and Mk. are practically the same (Mt. has "unto remission of sins," omitted by Mk.). Lk 22^{19b-20} is omitted by some MSS. (see RV. marg.); Westcott and Hort regard the words as a certain interpolation from 1 Co 11^{24, 25}; we cannot, in consequence, rely upon them as a *separate* authority. Hence in our study we may keep before us principally the accounts in Mt. and 1 Co. Note that St. Paul says that he received the account "of the Lord" (1 Co 11²³).

2. Jesus declares that His death is to be for the sake and good of His disciples ("shed for many," Mt., Mk.; "for you," 1 Co.; "given; poured out for you," Lk.). His death is symbolised by the *breaking* of the bread (Mt., Mk., Lk., 1 Co.); and that it was for the benefit of the disciples is shown by the *distribution* to them.

Mt. adds the words "unto remission of sins." It has been maintained that these words, since they appear in only one account, are a gloss, *i.e.* an explanation by a later copyist which has crept into the MS. But the question remains, even if they are a gloss, do they not correctly represent Jesus' thought? The disciples afterwards connected Jesus' death with the forgiveness of sins (Gal 1⁴, Heb 9²², 3³, 1 Pe 2²⁴ etc.); where were they likely to get that idea except from Jesus Himself?

It is true that Jesus does not tell us here *how* His death will avail for the remission of sins. That is a question too large for these Studies. Meantime, let us allow the fact to make its full impression on us.

3. Jesus further declares His death to be the inauguration of a *new* covenant (1 Co., I k.; Mt., Mk. have not the word "new," but it is implied).

The whole Jewish religion was based upon the idea of a *covenant*, or relationship between Israel and God. At Sinai the people solemnly entered into a covenant with Jehovah (Ex 24¹⁻¹¹), a covenant which was regarded as the foundation of their national life. Yet this covenant was felt to be imperfect, and Jeremiah boldly foretold the institution of a new covenant (Jer 31³¹⁻³⁴), *i.e.* practically a new religion. This prophecy Jesus here declares that He will fulfil,—in other words, *He will inaugurate a new religion, and it will be inaugurated in His blood.*

It is to be noted that one of the fundamental blessings of the new covenant foretold by Jeremiah was to be the remission of sins (Jer 31³⁴).

The momentous question came before the mind of Jesus, whether the New Dispensation which He was founding was or was not like the Old in including the idea of Sacrifice? He deliberately answered that it was. And He deliberately foresaw, and as deliberately accepted the consequence, that the Sacrifice of this New Dispensation could be none other than the Sacrifice of Himself.*

4. The great significance which Jesus attached to His death is shown by the fact that He instituted the Lord's Supper as a binding and perpetual rite (1 Co 11^{24, 25}).

LXXXIX.

Read Mk 8³¹, Mt 12³⁸⁻⁴⁰ 26^{31, 32} 18^{19, 20} 28¹⁶⁻²⁰, I k 24¹⁹.

1. It is clear from the Gospels that Jesus foretold not only His death, but that He would rise again after three days (Mk 8³¹ 9^{9, 31} 10³⁴).

The evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is far too big a question to be considered here. We can simply note the fact that, according to all our witnesses, Jesus foretold it.

2. The only hints which Jesus gives us as to the meaning of His resurrection are found in Mt 12³⁸⁻⁴⁰ 26^{31, 32}. In the first passage Jesus seems to mean that His resurrection will be the one great convincing "sign" that will be granted to those who want a sign, *i.e.* it will be the final proof of His Messiahship. So in Mt 26^{31, 32} He implies that His resurrection will revive the shattered faith of His disciples.†

* Sanday in Hastings' *BD*, ii. 631b.

† Gilbert, *The Revelation of Jesus*, pp. 289, 290.

With regard to His resurrection, as with regard to His death, Jesus could not give explicit teaching, since His disciples did not yet grasp the fact. For the significance which, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they saw in the event after it had taken place we must turn to the Epistles.

3. In Mt 18¹⁹. 20 28¹⁶⁻²⁰ Jesus promises to His disciples His perpetual presence.

"Many attempts have been made to define and confine these extraordinary words, but, like Samson's strength, they burst the withes of definition; and those only know what they mean, who, in prayer with their fellow-Christians, have felt the personal nearness of Him whom, having not seen, they love."

4. As risen Lord, Jesus promises to send to His disciples the Holy Spirit (Lk 24⁴⁹). It is interesting also to compare Lk 12^{11, 12} with 21^{14, 15}; what in the one passage is described as the work of the Holy Spirit, in the other Jesus promises to fulfil Himself.

5. The passages studied to-day are very important. Is Jesus to us merely a noble and inspiring historical figure, or is He the risen and present Lord? The whole power of early Christianity lay in the apprehension by the disciples that the Jesus they had known was exalted to power, and was carrying on from heaven the work He had begun on earth.

XC.

Read Mt 7²¹⁻²⁷ 21⁴²⁻⁴⁴.

1. Finally, Jesus claimed to be the Judge of men. It is He who will pronounce upon men the final sentence; it is separation from Him that will constitute their final doom; it is by their attitude towards His words that their safety or ruin will be determined (Mt 7²¹⁻²⁷). We must think out for ourselves the significance of these striking words. Other passages in which Jesus' claim to be the Judge of men is unmistakable are Mt 13^{30, 41} 16²⁷ 25^{31ff.}

"He is Judge, first, as the perfectly holy standard by which the eternal worth or worthlessness of all historical phenomena must finally be measured; and He is Judge, further, as the gracious Helper and Saviour, through whom God makes the attainment of His eternal destiny possible to every man who is called, so that in the judgment of the world by Christ we have the great thought that God will finally reject no man because he is a sinner, but only because he has rejected Him who could and would help him out of sin." †

* Stalker, *Christology of Jesus*, p. 120.

† Bayschlag, *NT Theology*, i. 191.

"But the description of Himself as Judge implies even more than this: it implies the consciousness of ability to estimate the deeds of men so exactly as to determine with unerring justice their everlasting state. How far beyond the reach of mere human nature such a claim is, it is easy to see. No human being knows another to the bottom; the most ordinary man is a mystery to the most penetrating of his fellow-creatures; the greatest of men would acknowledge that even in a child there are heights which he cannot reach, and depths which he cannot fathom. Who would venture to pronounce a final verdict on the character of another man, or to measure out his deserts for a single day? But Jesus ascribed to Himself the ability to determine for eternity the value of the whole life, as made up not only of its obvious acts, but of its most secret experiences and its most subtle motives." *

2. The tremendous influence of His Person on human destiny is asserted by Jesus in striking language in Mt 21⁴²⁻⁴⁴.

Jesus has been made by God the centre and foundation of human history. If men will not make Him the foundation-stone upon which to build their lives, they stumble with regard to Him and suffer the greatest injury and loss; the foundation-stone becomes a stumbling-block. But for those who violently and actively oppose Him, there is an even worse fate in store. They have opposed themselves to the irresistible rightness of things, and cannot but be crushed by its inevitable advance and triumph.†

XCI.

See Introduction, V. 3, VI.

* 1. What is the evidence for the sinlessness of Jesus? Do you consider it to be irresistible? •

* 2. How would you explain Jesus' words in Mk 10¹⁸?

* 3. How often, and on what occasions, did Jesus refer to His death?

* 4. What do we learn regarding His death from (a) Mk 10⁴²⁻⁴⁵, (b) the accounts of the Last Supper?

* 5. What did Jesus teach regarding His triumph over death and His perpetual presence with His disciples? What is the significance of this teaching?

* 6. What claims did Jesus make regarding His power to decide the destinies of men?

* Stalker, *Christology of Jesus*, p. 241.

† Cf. Dods, *The Parables of Our Lord* (first series), pp. 206-211. •

7. If time permits, the following note might be read aloud, and the statements in it discussed :—

NOTE ON STUDIES LXXIV.—XCI.

We have not tried in these Studies to offer a reasoned proof of the belief of the Church that Jesus was Divine. That belief is based, not only upon the evidence of the Synoptic Gospels, but upon the even more striking statements in the Fourth Gospel, and upon the conviction of Jesus' immediate followers as found in the other writings of the New Testament; and it would be unfair and unsatisfactory to discuss the question without considering the whole of the evidence. The assertion of the Deity of Christ, moreover, raises many profound metaphysical questions which are quite outside the range of these Studies. We seem to have found that Jesus was conscious of a unique personal nearness to God, and that He made the most overwhelming claims upon the obedience and allegiance of men, and felt Himself in a position to offer them infinite blessings. But this is not given to us in a reasoned system or in the form that we have it in the Creeds. Jesus did not speak in the language of philosophy or systematic theology. It may well be, that the only possible explanation of such a life and such claims is the explanation which the Church with almost unbroken unanimity has offered through nineteen centuries. But the drawing of that explanation from the facts, and the defence of it, is the task not of the student of Jesus' sayings, but of the systematic theologian, and is far too large a one to be attempted here. At the same time, it must be remembered that Jesus Christ is a phenomenon in the world's history that *must* be explained. The belief of Christendom is an explanation (cf. LXXXIII. 4, *end*).—is there any other?

The following words of Dr. Dale are so appropriate as to be worth quoting. "I believe that when faith in Christ as 'very God of very God' has been lost or shaken, its vigour is not to be restored by arguments which 'demonstrate' His divinity. It is by the same path along which in the first ages the Christian Church travelled to the substance of the faith of Nicæa, that individual men in our own times are to travel to it; that is, by discovering that He is the Lord of conduct, the Propitiation for the sins of the world, and the Giver of Eternal Life; He must be actually obeyed as having supreme authority over life, must be actually trusted as the Divine reason for the remission of sins and as the Giver of the Divine Life. When the reality and greatness of His redemptive powers are known by experience, a man will have no great difficulty in believing, on the authority of the words of our Lord in the four Gospels, that He will raise the dead and judge the world. These spiritual relations to Christ receive *their intellectual support* in the doctrine of His divinity. The doctrine is an empty form where they are not present; and where they are present the substance of the doctrine is believed, though every theological statement of it appears to be surrounded by difficulties which make it incredible. It is an immense gain for the intellect to receive and grasp the doctrine; but the supreme thing is for Christ to be really God to the affections, the conscience, and the will. He whom I obey as the supreme authority over my life, He whom I trust for the pardon of my sins, He to whom I look for the power to live righteously, He to whose final judgement I am looking for eternal blessedness or eternal destruction,—He, by whatever I may call Him, is my God. If I attribute the *name* to another, I attribute to Christ the reality for which the name stands; and unless, for me, Christ is one with the Eternal, He is really above the Eternal—has diviner prerogatives and achieves diviner works."*

* *Christian Doctrine*, pp. 312, 313.

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STUDIES XCII.-XCVIII.

THE EARTHLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

The Means of its Growth and Extension, XCII.-XCIII.

The Varied Reception it meets with, XCIV.

The Mixture of Good and Bad, XCV.

The Nature and Extent of its Growth, XCVI.

The Kingdom and the Church, XCVII.

We have seen that the great aim of Jesus was to establish the kingdom of God (VIII.), and that that kingdom had begun to be set up as a result of His own life and ministry (XVIII.). A question that must be of the greatest interest to us is, By what means did Jesus expect the kingdom to grow and develop, and what were to be its earthly fortunes? This question we shall consider during the present week.

XCII.

Read Mt 5¹³⁻¹⁶ 10⁵⁻⁴². & .

1. We may note, without spending time upon it, that Jesus certainly anticipated that the kingdom of God would free itself from all Jewish limitations (cf. Mt 21⁴³, and the parables of the Barren Fig-tree, Lk 13⁶⁻⁹; the Great Supper, Lk 14¹⁵⁻²⁴; the Royal Wedding, Mt 22¹⁻¹⁰; the Two Sons, Mt 21²⁸⁻³²), and become universal and world-wide (cf. Study XVI.).

2. As far as we can see, the one method on which Jesus relied for the extension of His kingdom was *personal witness and personal influence*. He gathered round Him a little band of men in whom He implanted the principle of a new life, and left them to communicate it to others. They were the salt of the earth to purify it, the light of the world to illuminate it (Mt 5¹³⁻¹⁶); if their testimony should lose its keenness and pungency, if they allowed their light to be hidden, nothing could take its place (vv. 13, 15). These words are worthy of our closest attention; for they reveal to us the means on which Jesus depended for the establishment of the kingdom of God. The great duty of His disciples was to confess Him (Mt 10³²); and having trained them, He sent them forth on a mission of evangelisation (Mt 10⁵⁻⁷), and after His resurrection gave them a world-wide commission (Mt 28¹⁹).

5¹³ is a warning to disciples not to lower their high standard in order to gain an influence over men. They are "to help men by being unlike them."

Vv. 14, 15, "As a city situate on the top of a hill cannot be hid, neither can a light fail to be seen unless it is expressly prevented from shining. No pains need be taken to secure that the light shall shine. For that it is enough to be a light. But Christ knew that there would be strong temptation for men to hide their light. It would draw the world's attention to them, and so expose them to the ill-will of such as hate the light. . . . Cowards can always find plausible excuses for the policy of obscuratation,—reasons of prudence and wisdom; gradual accustoming of men to new ideas; deference to the prejudices of good men; avoidance of rupture by premature outspokenness; but generally the true reason is fear of unpleasant consequences to one's self" (Bruce).

3. Further, we learn that Jesus expected the kingdom to meet with the fiercest opposition. It would be in the midst of conflict and hostility that the disciples' testimony would have to be borne. And their attitude must be one of gentleness and forbearance. This is brought out throughout Jesus' teaching, but especially in Mt 10. The chapter may seem too long for one day's Study; but

* Gore, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 45.

some verses have been studied already, and others relate more especially only to the immediate circumstances. The most important verses to note are 11-14, 16-18, 21-25, 27, 32-36.

XCHH.

Read Lk 24⁴⁵⁻⁴⁹, Ac 1⁸, Mk 1⁸, Lk 11¹³.

1. Jesus entrusted the fortunes of His kingdom to the personal influence of those who by faith in Him had become its members. For the carrying out of this overwhelming task which He laid upon them, He promised His disciples a new and powerful Divine equipment.

2. Read Lk 24⁴⁵⁻⁴⁹, Ac 1⁸, and observe carefully the greatness of the task which Jesus committed to His followers, and the power upon which He bade them rely. Note that the promise of power is immediately connected with the carrying out of the task.

The promise of the Father (Lk 24⁴⁹),—that which had been promised in the OT, the goal to which the whole OT had pointed, cf. Is 44³, Ezk 36²⁷, Joel 2²⁸, etc.

3. The Baptist had prophesied that the distinctive feature of Jesus' ministry would be that He would baptize with the Holy Spirit (Mk 1⁸). The Spirit was the power in which Jesus fulfilled His own ministry (Lk 3²², 4^{1, 14-18}, Mt 12²⁸, Ac 1²). He taught His disciples that the Holy Spirit was the great gift to pray for, and that their Heavenly Father would delight to give it to them (Lk 11¹³).

Note how Lk. says "the Holy Spirit" where Mt. (7¹¹) has "good things." The Holy Spirit is the supremely good thing.

4. A recent writer has told us how, after many years of doubt, he resolved to try to discover for himself, from an examination of the NT, what was the distinctive and unique thing in Christianity. From a careful study of the experience of the early Christians, as recorded in the Book of Acts and the Epistles, he found that "the great distinctive thing in Christianity is the gift of the Holy Spirit to men," i.e. "the entrance into the world, through Jesus Christ, of a new principle and power of spiritual light and life, called the Holy Spirit."* Those who remember the place which the Holy Spirit has in St. Paul's writings will hardly be inclined to question the truth of this.

* W. L. Walker, *The Spirit and the Incarnation* (T. & T. Clark, 9s.), pp. 23, 34.

5. As far as we can discover, therefore, it was upon the personal influence of individual disciples, whose natures and capacities had been illuminated and reinforced by this Divine gift, that Jesus depended for the advancement of His kingdom.

XCIV.

Read Mt 13¹⁻²³.

1. The extension of the kingdom by preaching is illustrated in the parable of the Sower. "The seed is the word of God" (Lk 8¹¹). The Sower is Christ, "acting through His Spirit in the Church" (Swete).

2. The parable teaches that the kingdom will receive varied treatment at the hands of men. By uttering this parable Jesus showed that He was under no illusion with regard to the nature of the enthusiasm of the crowds (Mt 13²) that gathered to hear Him; He desired to warn His disciples against building false hopes on the apparent success, and to lead His hearers to an earnest self-examination of their attitude towards His teaching.

The wayside hearers are those who are so preoccupied with current thoughts and interests, that the word of the kingdom cannot find an entrance into their hearts. They are like the man in Lk 12¹³, who, while Jesus was speaking, was thinking all the time of how he could get Jesus' help in his quarrel with his brother.

The second class consists of those who receive the word impulsively, and without giving the word entrance into all the secret places of their life, and are confronting it with their most cherished feelings and ways, that they may clearly see the extent of the changes it will work; while they are pondering it in the majesty of its hope and the vastness of its revelation; while they are striving to forecast all its results in them and upon them; while they are hesitating because they are in earnest, and would receive the word for eternity or not at all, and would give it entrance to their whole being, or exclude it altogether,--while others are doing this, the superficial man has settled the whole matter out of hand, and he who yesterday was a known scoffer, is to-day a loud-voiced child of the kingdom.* But we must not forget the power of the word itself, once admitted, to deepen character.

The third class consists of those whose proper growth is stunted by the presence of weeds. What these are is told us in Mt 13²², Mk 4¹⁹, Lk 8¹⁴. The result is that such Christians "bring no fruit to perfection" (Lk 8¹⁴).

The fourth class is most fully described in Lk 8¹⁵, where every word repays study. The importance which Jesus attached to the "honest and good heart," we have already seen (XXXIX., XL.). Further, those who form this good soil "*hold fast*" the word, and "*bring forth fruit with patience.*" "There are processes in nature which

* Dods, *The Parables of Our Lord* (first series), p. 11.

you can't hurry. You must let your milk *stand*, if you wish cream." * So it is that the word must be allowed time to sink in and bear its fruit. Meditation was never more needed than in this busy age.

NOTE.—In connection with this parable, Jesus states the reason why He adopted the parabolic form of teaching. Why did Jesus speak in parables? To make truth plainer, is the obvious answer. But here Jesus says that the purpose is to *hide* truth (Mt 13¹³ has *because, ὅτι*; Mk 4¹², Lk 8¹⁰, *in order that, ἵνα*). These words have given rise to much discussion. Some maintain that Jesus *could* not have uttered such a statement. But it must be remembered that it is a law of the spiritual world that truth resisted always hardens. Such a law we must regard as of God's design. Moreover a point had been reached in Jesus' ministry when a sifting process was inevitable. The parabolic method was eminently calculated to lead on those who were spiritually minded and truly interested, and to repel the careless and indifferent. Those who wish to go into the question are referred to the paragraph in Sanday's article on Jesus Christ in Hastings' *Bible Dictionary* (vol. ii. p. 617b); Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching*, pp. 19-23; Westcott on Jn 12³⁰. 40

XCV.

Read Mt 13²⁴⁻³⁰. 36-43. 47-50.

1. The parables of the Tares and of the Drag-net warn us that we must expect to find in the kingdom of heaven an admixture of evil which will not be gathered out until "the end of the world."

2. The presence of tares in the world is a terrible problem. The question of the servants in v.²⁷ has been re-echoed by many a human heart. But Christ came to set things right. Alas! the presence of tares is still more conspicuous, and still more perplexing, in the society called by His name. "Where is there to be found a more passionate greed of gain, or a more self-indulgent luxury, or a more thorough-going worldliness, than among the masses of the trading Christian races?" †

"Well, is the thing we see, Salvation?"

That the parable refers to the existence of evil in the Church, or Christian society, and not only in the world, is probable from the following facts:—(a) The tares are to be gathered *out of the kingdom* (v.⁴¹); (b) the tares are sown after the wheat and *among the wheat* (v.²⁹); (c) the word used for tares (*ζιζάνια*) is a plant which in the early stages very closely resembles wheat, and hence would be particularly appropriate as a description of counterfeit Christians.

3. As to the application of the parable there are the most divergent views. Does it absolutely prohibit Church discipline? There can be no doubt that by giving heed to the parable the Church might have been saved from persecuting some of its choicest spirits. One great reason which Jesus gives for caution, is the danger of rooting up the wheat along with the tares (v.²⁹).

* Dods, *The Parables of Our Lord* (first series), p. 23.

† *Ibid.*, p. 29.

New movements are always apt to rouse suspicion: Jesus bids us wait and let them reach their full development, ere we pronounce them wheat or tares.

4. But when there can be no doubt about the tares, ought the evil not to be stamped out? Even then caution is needed. We need be in no hurry, for the time is coming when the distinction will be acted upon.

"Only let a man accept the account here given of the end of the tares, and he will have very little desire to anticipate or hasten that end. When God says, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' we feel that the darkest injustice and wrong-doing will be adequately taken account of."

5. In what respects does the parable of the Drag-net resemble and differ from that of the Tares? Note the special emphasis in the second parable on the completeness of the final separation.

XCVI.

Read Mt 13³¹⁻³³, Mk 4²⁶⁻²⁹.

1. Jesus' confidence in the growth of the kingdom is expressed in the parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven. These parables give the bright side of the picture, as those studied in XCIV., XCV. give the darker. "Both parables set forth the small beginning, gradual spread, and immense development of the kingdom of God—the one from without, the other from within. Externally, the kingdom will at last embrace all nations; internally, it will transform the whole of human life" (Plummer).

2. The parable of the Mustard Seed teaches—(a) That the cause of Jesus, though to outward seeming utterly insignificant, had within itself, like a seed, a principle of *vitality*, and must be estimated not by its present appearance, but by its future possibilities; (b) that it would progress by a regular natural process of development; (c) that it had before it a great and marvellous future.

"So that the birds, etc.," cf. Dn 4¹⁰⁻¹², Ezk 31⁶; "these passages show that this was a recognised metaphor for a great empire giving protection to the nations" (Plummer). But it is possible that this detail is added merely to show the size to which the plant will grow,—it becomes a tree in which birds can lodge.

3. The parable of the Leaven illustrates not so much the extent as the nature of the growth of the kingdom. The truth applies

* Dods, *The Parables of Our Lord* (first series), p. 38.

both to individuals and to society as a whole. The Spirit of Christ works silently, slowly, surely from within, more and more bringing all things under its influence.

We must not, of course, leave out of the question personal responsibility. The heaven will not work in us unless we allow it free play (cf. Mt 13¹⁸⁻²³); nor will society be leavened unless *we* leaven it (cf. Mt 5¹³⁻¹⁶, Study XCH. 2).

4. The silent, natural, regular, and sure growth of the kingdom is illustrated in the parable of the Seed Growing Secretly (Mk 4²⁶⁻²⁹).

"Jesus' aim was to impress upon His hearers that as in the kingdom of nature, so in the kingdom of God, there is a law of growth and a fixed order of development which must be recognised and respected by them."

5. The truths taught in these parables seem simple and obvious. We are apt to assent to them and turn away. But if we carefully ponder them and try to bring them into relation with our experience of life, we shall find them full of instruction and stimulus. Think again of the richness of meaning in the three truths indicated in para. 2, and that stated in para. 4, and turn back to the parables themselves to see how these bear them out.

XCVII.

Read Mt 16¹³⁻²⁰ 18¹⁵⁻¹⁸.

1. In the Gospels the expression "the kingdom of God" occurs 112 times; only twice do we find the word "Church" (ἐκκλησία), both passages occurring only in St. Matthew's Gospel. In the Epistles the relative prominence of the two expressions is reversed.

2. ἐκκλησία is the word regularly used in the Septuagint (*i.e.* the Greek translation of the OT) to translate the Hebrew word *qāhāl*, meaning the *congregation* or *assembly* of Israel. Having won from His disciples an acknowledgment of Himself as the Messiah (cf. Study LXXIV. 3), Jesus solemnly announces the foundation of a new society, a new congregation of God, a new Israel,—the Church of the Messiah.

This passage clearly shows that Jesus meant to found a society. He intended that there should be a Church.

* Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching*, p. 126; the whole exposition is worth reading.

3. It is most important to observe the circumstances under which the words were spoken. It was the crisis of Jesus' ministry. Galilee had rejected Him, and only the faithful inner circle of disciples remained. If they failed, Jesus' cause would have been at an end. But in their whole-hearted acknowledgment of Him as the Christ, Jesus found a rock upon which He could build His Church.

4. The relation of Peter to the Church has been the ground of endless controversy in Christian history. The most natural view seems to be, that Peter was the first man to confess with his whole heart Jesus to be the Christ, and hence Jesus could find in him a foundation for His society. He had secured one true disciple; from that nucleus the Church would grow.

5. What is the relation of the Church to the kingdom of God? Since Augustine the two have often been identified. But scholars are generally agreed that the kingdom of God is a larger and more comprehensive term, and that "we are not justified in identifying the one with the other, so as to be able to apply directly to the Ecclesia whatever is said in the Gospels about the kingdom of God."*

6. The second passage in which the word *ἐκκλησία* occurs (Mt 18¹⁵⁻¹⁷) is of less significance. The "Church" must mean either, as Dr. Hort thinks,† the Jewish local community, or, as the verses that follow seem rather to suggest, the new Christian brotherhood. The word cannot have any reference to ecclesiastical discipline, for no Church in the later sense as yet existed.

7. To Peter (Mt 16¹⁹), and to the disciples generally (Mt 18¹⁸), Jesus committed the power of "binding and loosing" upon earth in such a way that their action would be ratified in heaven. Binding and loosing were the technical words for "the verdict of a doctor of the law who pronounces something as 'bound,' i.e. 'forbidden,' or else 'loosed,' i.e. 'permitted.'"[‡] But the context here in both passages (Mt 16¹⁹, "keys," 18¹⁷) seems to suggest the further power of admitting to or excluding from the Christian society. These powers had hitherto been exercised by Jesus Himself; but now He was about to entrust them to the society He had founded. It is to be noted that the promise in Mt 16¹⁹ is immediately connected with the confession of Jesus as Christ. It is only so far as the Church is founded upon this basis, only so far as it is truly *Christian*, that the promise can be regarded as valid.§ Similarly, the promise in

* Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*, p. 19.

† *Ibid.*, p. 10.

‡ Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, p. 214.

§ Cf. Bruce, *The Kingdom of God*, pp. 262, 263.

Mt 18¹⁸ is closely connected with the assurance of Christ's perpetual presence (vv. 19, 20). Only in so far as Christ is present with the Church can it properly exercise the functions indicated.

XCVIII.

See Introduction, V. 3, VI.

* 1. By what means did Jesus expect the kingdom to extend itself? Can you think of any other besides the one mentioned in Study XCII.? What is the evidence that the one there mentioned is that relied upon by Jesus?

* 2. What did Jesus teach regarding the Holy Spirit?

3. Consider briefly what kind of persons are indicated by the four classes referred to in Mt 13¹⁻²³.

* 4. What is the lesson Jesus meant to teach by the parables of the Tares and the Drag-net?

The point raised in XCV. 3 might be briefly discussed, but time should not be spent upon it.

5. What lessons are taught in the parables of the Mustard Seed, the Leaven, and the Seed Growing Secretly?

* 6. Consider, as far as time permits, the interpretation of Mt 16¹⁷⁻¹⁹ and 18¹⁵⁻¹⁸. (a) What does the word "Church" mean in each passage? (b) What is meant by the power to bind and to loose? (observe carefully the statements at the beginning of XCVII. 7). (c) Has the power here conferred any limitations or qualifications?

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STUDIES XCIX.-CXII.

THE LAST THINGS.

Jesus' Second Coming:

Unquestionably foretold by Himself, XCIX.

The Need of Watchfulness, C.

The Need of Faithfulness, CI.

Its Time: (a) In the same Generation, CII.

(b) After a Long Period, CIII.

The Great Eschatological Discourse, CIV.

The Last Judgment, CVI.-CVII.

Hades and Paradise, CVIII.

Gehenna and the Outer Darkness, CIX.

The Larger Hope, CX.

Human Responsibility and Divine Love, CXI.

We have come now to the most difficult and perplexing part of our study,—the sayings of Jesus with regard to His Second Coming and the end of the world. With regard to a matter respecting which there is such overwhelming diversity of opinion, it will be impossible in these Studies to reach any final conclusion; only a few of the points most worthy of notice can be indicated. Some things, it may be, will stand out fairly clear and certain; but difficulties will remain which each man must ponder and seek to solve for himself. This exercise, if carried out in a worthy spirit, will prove a helpful and valuable discipline. If our previous Studies have meant anything, they will have led us to doubt our knowledge, our information, our exegesis, our interpretation, rather than to doubt Jesus Christ. It is worthy of note that the various solutions proposed by critics, some of which may seem very rash and violent, are all prompted by the desire to free the teaching of Jesus from what might appear inconsistencies or mistakes. They will admit anything rather than that Jesus was mistaken. Finally, it must be remembered that Christ's teaching about the last things was not given with a view to satisfying our curiosity, but "in practical relation to present life and duty."* If we seek in His words, not a scientific explanation of things which from their very nature must remain mysterious to us, but moral and spiritual help, we shall be amply rewarded, and will more and more feel that the solution of the speculative difficulties can be allowed to wait.

* Salmond, *Christian Doctrine of Immortality* (3rd ed.), p. 287. ●

XCIX.

Read Mt 16²⁷ 25³¹ 13³⁶⁻⁴³,

1. Jesus came to found the kingdom of God; He announced that He would come again to *consummate* it. Nothing seems more certain than that Jesus foretold His Second Advent or Parousia.* There appears to be equally little room for doubt that this Return is associated, in some passages at least, with the end of the age and the final judgment (Mt 16²⁷ 25^{31ff.} etc.).

2. Mt 16²⁷. At the solemn crisis in His ministry when He announced to His startled disciples that the Messiah was to die (v.²¹), and called them to follow Him in the path of the cross (vv.²⁴⁻²⁶), Jesus assured them that what was now for them an act of faith would one day be outwardly vindicated. The Son of Man, whom men now judged worthy of a cross, would one day come to be the Judge of men. This significant verse can refer only to the final judgment. With it cf. Mk 8³⁸ (see Study XXIV. 4) and Mt 10³²⁻³³.

Mt 25^{31ff.} will be studied in detail later. It is to be noted now merely as confirming Mt 16²⁷.

3. That Jesus looked forward to a day in which the kingdom which He had come to found would be finally consummated, is further illustrated in Mt 13³⁶⁻⁴³. In this passage no mention is made of His personal return, but it is clearly parallel to Mt 16²⁷ 25^{31ff.}.

4. Let us fix these passages in our minds as a starting-point. Whether we can attach the same meaning to Jesus' "coming" in all passages remains to be seen. But for the fact that Christ foretold His Second Coming in *some* sense, the evidence will rapidly accumulate as we proceed.

* *Parousia* means literally *presence*, hence *arrival*, *advent*; hence applied in the NT especially to the Second Advent of Christ; occurs Mt 24³. 27. 37. 39 and frequently in the Epistles.

C.

Read Lk 12³⁵⁻⁴⁰ 21³⁴⁻³⁶, Mt 25¹⁻¹³.

1. One fact in regard to the Second Coming, to which Jesus gives great prominence in His teaching, is that it will be *unexpected*. Hence He constantly inculcates the necessity of watchfulness.

2. This necessity is enforced¹ in the parables of the Watchful Servants (Lk 12³⁵⁻³⁸ = Mt 24⁴² = Mk 13³³⁻³⁶), and of the Goodman Surprised by a Thief (Lk 12³⁹⁻⁴⁰ = Mt 24⁴³⁻⁴⁴). By constant repetition and by a wealth of illustration, Jesus sought to bring home to His disciples the need to WATCH and BE READY. On few things did He dwell with more insistence.

3. In Lk 21³⁴⁻³⁶ Jesus once more in impressive language enforces the need of ceaseless vigilance. "That day" is to overtake the world as a snare.

"That day"—the day of the Messiah's return, cf. Lk 10¹² 17³⁰⁻³¹, Mt 7²²⁻²⁴, etc.

4. The unexpected nature of the Lord's Return is again illustrated in the parable of the Ten Virgins (Mt 25¹⁻¹³). Jesus Himself explains its lesson in v. ¹³. The parable, moreover, shows us that watching does not consist in being engaged in a conscious, anxious looking out, but in being always ready.

* "The fisherman's wife who spends her time on the pier-head watching for the boats, cannot be so well prepared to give her husband a comfortable reception as the woman who is busy about her household work, and only now and again turns a longing look seaward."²

In this parable especially, we shall get into difficulties if we seek to give a meaning to every detail (see Introd. III. (c)); there is one central thought, and all else is subordinate to it and intended only to enforce it.

It is very worthy of notice that even the Wise Virgins slept. But their sleep was the sleep of watchers, even in their slumber alert and listening for the call, and ready at once to meet it when it should come. "So though all the occupations of a Christian in which he is not watching for his Lord and trimming his lamp, there is, or should be, an *undercurrent of expectation*, ever keeping him in unconscious preparedness, occasionally roused into actual looking out to see. He is not always gazing forward, but ever and anon sends a messenger from the inmost citadel of his soul to enquire, "Watchman, what of the night?"³ †

* Dods, *The Parables of Our Lord* (first series), p. 238.

† *Ibid.*, p. 249.

CI.

Read Lk 12⁴¹⁻⁴⁸ 19¹¹⁻²⁷, Mt 25¹⁴⁻³⁰.

1. The parable of the Ten Virgins suggested to us that Jesus demanded not only watchfulness but preparedness from His disciples in view of His return. Hence we find that He frequently insists on the duty of *faithfulness*.

2. The Christian is represented¹ as a servant or steward who has to render an account on his lord's return (Lk 12⁴¹⁻⁴⁸). Jesus realised the danger of a prolonged absence leading to carelessness and dissoluteness (v.⁴⁵, cf. 21³⁴), and earnestly warns His disciples that the Return will be certain and unexpected.

Vv. 41, 42. "Christ answers one question by another, which does not tell the questioner exactly what he wishes to know, but what it concerns him to know. It is enough that each who hears recognises that he is an *οικονομος* (steward) with responsibilities" (Plummer).

Vv. 46-48. The question of punishment will be taken up in a later Study.

3. The duty of faithful work during the absence of the Lord is enforced in the parable of the Talents (Mt 25¹⁴⁻³⁰).

It is noteworthy that the lord of the servants is represented as being absent for "a long time" (v.¹⁹); the servants are left time enough to double their capital (v. 20, 22).

We are taught in the parable that "the kingdom imperatively demands *work* from all its citizens." * The fault of the wicked servant was just that he did nothing; he is called *stothful* (v.²⁰) and *unprofitable* (v.³⁰). V.²⁷ teaches that every man can at least do something: if a man does not know how to set to work himself, he can attach himself to some of the many organised forms of Christian effort, where he will be set to work; every man, too, can pray. It is to be observed that it is the man with one talent who is in danger of burying it. "This miserable fear of being mediocre, how many a good work has it prevented or crippled!" †

Finally, the parable teaches that "equal diligence in the use of unequal endowments is equally rewarded." ‡

4. The parable of the Pounds (Lk 19¹¹⁻²⁷), like that of the Talents, enforces the duty of faithful work, but has many points of difference, and was probably uttered on a different occasion.

(a) Note the introduction explaining the immediate purpose of the parable (v.¹¹). (b) The parable has a reference to the unbelieving Jews as well as to the disciples (vv. 11, 27). (c) The parable teaches that "unequal diligence in the use of equal endowments is unequally rewarded." ‡

* Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 201.

† Dods, *The Parables of Our Lord* (first series), p. 260.

‡ Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching*, pp. 200, 215.

CII.

Read Mt 10²³ 16²⁸ (= Mk 9¹ = Lk 9²⁷) 24³²⁻⁴²
 (= Mk 13²⁸⁻³⁷ = Lk 21²⁹⁻³³) 26⁶⁴ (= Mk 14⁶² = Lk 22⁶⁹).

1. With regard to the *time* of Jesus' Second Advent, there are some passages which seem to indicate that He expected that it would take place within the lifetime of His own generation.

2. In Mt 10²³ Jesus tells His disciples that they will not have completed their mission to the cities of Israel, "till the Son of Man be come." This can hardly refer to the final coming in judgment, because Jesus expected His Gospel to be preached to the whole world before the end should come (Mt 24¹⁴ 26¹³).

3. Mt 16²⁷ unmistakably refers to Jesus' final coming in judgment. The most natural interpretation of v.²⁸ would be that He expected this event to take place in the lifetime of those present. If we follow the account of Mt., it must be confessed that it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the evangelist, at least, interpreted the words to refer to the Second Coming; but the version given by Mk. and Lk. can be regarded as actually fulfilled in the triumphant spread of the Gospel which began at Pentecost.

The principal interpretations of the words are those which apply them to—(a) the Second Advent; (b) the Transfiguration, which is immediately connected with this prophecy by all three evangelists; (c) Pentecost; (d) the destruction of Jerusalem.

4. In the great final eschatological discourse (Mt 24, Mk 13), which we shall return to again, we have in Mk 13³⁰ (= Mt 24³⁴) the declaration that "this generation shall not pass away, until all these things be accomplished." These words follow verses (Mk 13²⁴⁻²⁷), which must refer to the Second Advent, and not merely to the destruction of Jerusalem (13¹⁴⁻²⁰).

But it is to be noted that side by side with Mk 13³⁰ (Mt 24³⁴) is the very remarkable assertion of v.³² (Mt v.³⁶). We must find some interpretation of v.³⁰ that will not contradict this; the words of v.³² are too emphatic to mean only "that Jesus knew that the event would take place in that generation, but did not know the exact day or hour."

No attempt to escape from the difficulty by giving "generation" in v.³⁰ some other meaning than its natural one can be regarded as successful.

5 It is difficult to treat Mt 26⁶⁴ as applying to the Final Advent. The word *henceforth* (ἀπ' ἄρτι, Mt.; ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν, Lk.) seems decisive.

It is noteworthy that Lk. omits the second clause, as if it did not add anything new to the meaning; on this view the words "coming on the clouds of heaven" (cf. Dn 7¹³) must be regarded as a figurative expression to describe the Messiah's power and triumph.

6. How, then, are we to deal with these serious difficulties? The possible alternatives stem to be:

(a) To regard Jesus as having prophesied His early return, and having been mistaken. But many of us will feel that we know Jesus too well to admit such a possibility. Moreover, in Study CHH. we shall find convincing evidence that Jesus did *not* anticipate an early return. Further, this view contradicts Mk 13³², Ac 17, the former of which is admitted by critics of every school to be a certain utterance of Jesus.

(b) To suppose that the disciples misunderstood and misreported Jesus. But, as has been said, "this is to save Christ's credit by sacrificing that of the evangelists." * In so far as it implies a serious perversion of Jesus' meaning, it is a hypothesis which we should have much hesitation in accepting. At the same time, we must remember how the disciples failed to understand Jesus' plain declarations about His death and resurrection (Lk 9⁴⁵ 24⁴¹), until events made them plain. We know from the Epistles that the early Church expected Jesus' return within the lifetime of that generation, and this hope may have slightly coloured the disciples' report of their Master's words, cf. Mt 16²⁸ (para. 3, above). Moreover, as we shall see in Study CIV., the distinction between the Destruction of Jerusalem and the Lord's Return, so plain to us who stand between the two events, was not recognised by the evangelists.

(c) To hold that Jesus referred to more than one event when He spoke of His coming. The great discourse in Mk 13 seems to refer to at least two events. Every great crisis in the history of the kingdom might be regarded as His coming. Mt 26⁶⁴ (para. 5, above) would lend support to this view. "In His eschatological discourses Christ recognises, as Old Testament prophecy did, the partial and preliminary manifestation as involving the final." †

(d) Some, starting from this last point of view, go further, and maintain that Jesus did not foretell His personal return at all; that His coming is purely spiritual. They lay great emphasis on Mt 26⁶⁴, and on the fact that in St. John's Gospel Jesus' return is spoken of principally as spiritual. But such a view can be maintained only by doing great violence to the natural meaning of the numerous passages in the Synoptists which imply a personal return; and even in the Fourth Gospel the personal return is asserted, e.g. 14³ 21²². ‡ Moreover, it is difficult to believe that this deeply rooted and universal belief of the early Church can have sprung up without any basis in Jesus' own words.

CHH.

* Read Lk 12^{38, 45}, Mt 24¹⁴ 21⁴¹, Lk 21²⁴, Mt 13.

1. In opposition to the class of passages which we studied yesterday, there is a plain announcement by Jesus that He did not know the time of His return (Mt 24³⁶); and there is a large number of passages which show that He anticipated that a long interval might elapse before His return.

* Salmond, *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 303.

† *Ibid.*, p. 306.

‡ *Ibid.*, pp. 307, 308.

2. In Lk 12^{38, 45} He asserts the possibility of a long delay, which might lead to carelessness and wantonness in the lives of His disciples. Cf. also Mt 25¹⁹.

The picture in Lk 12⁴⁵, when transferred to the spiritual sphere, portrays a state of matters which were scarcely likely to be reached in the early days of the Gospel. "Not at the beginning of a religious movement, not in its creative epoch, do such scandalous phenomena make their appearance."

3. Further, we have to take account of Jesus' declaration that the end would not come until the Gospel was preached to the world (Mt 24¹⁴, cf. 26¹³ 28¹⁹), a process which He could not have failed to foresee must be a slow one.

"One sign (*i.e.* of the end) alone is sure, that the Gospel must be preached in the whole world for a witness to all nations, that the message of Salvation must do its work in the world of history" † (Mt 24. 6. 14).

4. Again, Jesus seems to have clearly anticipated a period of grace extended to the Gentiles corresponding to the special education of the Jewish race (Mt 21⁴¹, cf. Lk 21²⁴).

5. Lastly, and most important, we have to bear in mind all the parables about the slow and regular growth of the kingdom as a mingled society of good and bad (Mt 13, Mk 4²⁶⁻²⁹). The more deeply we reflect upon these parables, the more certain we shall feel that they could not have been spoken by Jesus had He been certain that the world would come to an end within a single generation. Let us but enter into the spirit of these parables, and we shall feel that the one explanation of the sayings we studied yesterday which is *impossible*, is that which declares that Jesus shared the apocalyptic expectations of the Jews and was mistaken.

CIV.

Read Mk 13 (= Mt 24 = Lk 21).

1. Bearing in mind what we have already learnt, we may now study as a whole the great eschatological discourse uttered in the closing days of Jesus' life, and recorded by all three evangelists.

2. This discourse relates to two events,—the destruction of Jerusalem, and the return of the Son of Man at the end of the world. In their question the disciples regarded the two events as

* Bruce, *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 491.
† Beyschlag, *NT Theology*, i. 194.

taking place simultaneously (Mt 24^{2, 3}), and in the discourse it is impossible to distinguish them always with certainty.

"In all three records the outlines of the two main events, with their signs, cannot always be disentangled. Some of the utterances clearly point to the destruction of Jerusalem; others equally clearly to the return of Christ. But there are some which might apply to either or both; and we, who stand between the two, cannot be sure which one, if only one, is intended. In its application to the lives of the hearers each event taught a similar truth, and conveyed a similar warning; and therefore a clearly cut distinction between them was as little needed as an exact statement of date." These words of Dr. Plummer (*Com. on St. Luke*, p. 477) deserve to be well weighed.

3. Following Mark's account, with which the others in the main correspond, Jesus first warns His disciples of the troubles and unrest which will follow His departure (vv.⁵⁻⁸), and warns them not to allow these to interfere with the prosecution of their mission (vv.⁹⁻¹³). Vv.¹⁴⁻²³ seem to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem. At v.²⁴ we pass to another and later event, the coming of the Son of Man; Matthew's "immediately after" (24²⁹) shows even more clearly than Mk. that the evangelist expected the events to follow one another in close succession. In vv.^{28, 29} the disciples are bidden observe the signs which precede these events; contrast this with the passages studied in C., where the coming is described as unexpected. Vv.³⁰⁻³² the event is certain, but the time known to none but the Father. Vv.³³⁻³⁶ are a final warning to watch, based on the uncertainty of the time.

4. Here we must leave the subject. To discuss each verse of this discourse in detail would require a book for itself. Students are advised not to puzzle too long over difficulties, of which perhaps no solution is possible. It is better to dwell on what seems certain, and on that part of the teaching which has a practical bearing,—the certainty that Jesus will consummate the kingdom He came to institute, the reality of His coming in history and in the Spirit, the necessity of watchfulness and faithfulness that we may be always ready to meet our Lord. Vv.^{5, 9, 10, 13, 22, 23, 26, 33-37} have a direct practical message that we cannot afford to miss.

CV.

See Introduction, V. 3, VI.

* 1. What do you consider to be the evidence that Jesus foretold His personal return?

2. What is the evidence that the return will be unexpected?

* 3. What are the main lessons of the parables of the Ten Virgins, the Talents, and the Pounds?

* 4. Discuss Mt 10²³ 16²⁸ 24³⁴ 26⁶⁴.

* 5. In what possible ways has it been attempted to reconcile the sayings in which Jesus seems to anticipate an early return, and those in which He seems to have expected His return to take place after a long interval? Can you reach any provisional solution?

If members of the Circle feel that they have been able to reach no satisfactory conclusion, they may reflect that the wisest and best commentators have been perplexed by the same difficulties. This part of our study affords an opportunity for the exercise of faith and patience, and yet it is possible to reap from it, in spite of the perplexities, an abundance of help and inspiration.

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CVI.

Read Mk 4^{11, 12}, Mt 13⁴⁰⁻⁴³ 11²⁰⁻²⁴ 12^{41, 42}, Lk 13¹⁻⁹.

1. We have already seen that Jesus claimed to be Himself the Judge of men (XC.). This judgment is in part *present*.

"As the Mediator of Divine judgment in the present, Jesus forgives sin (Mk 2⁵), He denounces unbelieving cities (Mt 11²¹⁻²⁴, etc.), and breaks up the most intimate bonds of social life because founded on false peace (Mt 10³⁴⁻³⁷)."^{*} So also Jesus declared that His speaking in parables was intended to fulfil the sentence of judicial blindness pronounced on those who would not see (Mk 4^{11, 12}).

2. But besides this present judgment, Jesus also spoke of a final judgment, closely connected with His Parousia, and known as the "day of Judgment," or, more briefly, "that day." It will be the day when men's destinies will be fixed, and purity will be gained by separation (Mt 13⁴⁰⁻⁴³, cf. 7^{22, 23}). The judgment will be universal, including the nations of the past (Mt 11²⁰⁻²⁴ 12^{41, 42}).

3. In Lk 13¹⁻⁵ Jesus teaches us that we may not interpret striking calamities as Divine judgments, but that refusal to repent will bring to all a certain and inevitable ruin (vv.^{3, 5}). In vv.⁶⁻⁹ He teaches that judgment is frequently delayed in order to allow an opportunity for repentance; but if the opportunity is neglected, the doom is sure.

4. As regards the *standard* of judgment, it will be according to a man's deeds (Mt 16²⁷). Not profession but action will be taken account of (Mt 7²¹). A man's words, as the index of his heart, will have a determining effect (Mt 12³⁴⁻³⁷). Finally, since Christ is the revelation of the Divine righteousness, judgment will be passed according to a man's attitude to Him (Mt 10^{32, 33}, Mk 8³⁸, Mt 10^{40, 42}).

CVII.

Read Mt 25³¹⁻⁴⁶.

1. The most distinct and explicit teaching with regard to the Final Judgment is found in the striking picture of the Judgment scene recorded in Mt 25³¹⁻⁴⁶.

^{*} Charles, *Eschatology*, p. 336.

This scene has been regarded as representing—

(a) The Judgment of *Christians*, inasmuch as “those gathered before the Judge are described as His brethren” (v. 40).

(b) The Judgment of *Heathen*, since those who had heard the Gospel would be aware of this teaching of Jesus and could not show the surprise expressed in vv. 37-44; moreover, “all the nations” (*τὰ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη*, v. 32) in its ordinary use generally stands for the Gentiles.

(c) *The General Judgment*. This last view is rendered probable by the fact that the Judgment is connected with the Parousia, and the whole setting of the scene suggests the final world judgment.

2. The main point of the parable is the *test* by which men are divided into the two classes. In the first place, the test is one of character and nature,—the sheep are separated from the goats. Character, moreover, is judged by men's attitude towards Christ. But since all have not been brought into contact with the human Jesus, their character will be estimated by their treatment of His representatives.

“The brethren of the Son of Man in this judgment programme are all the poor, suffering, sorrow-laden sons of men, and the principle on which judgment proceeds is that as men treat these they would have treated the Judge had they had the opportunity.”*

3. It is to be noted that it is not simply acts of philanthropy in themselves that are to form the decisive test, but *these as done out of regard for Christ*, i.e. as springing from a right attitude towards Himself. The great test is a man's attitude to Christ,—love for Him and the possession of His Spirit.†

4. While we cannot emphasise too strongly the teaching of this passage, that the ultimate test of men is the essentially practical one of the possession of the Spirit of Christ, and that “the standard is a standard of character and life,”‡ we must also remember that this same passage suggests the deepest questions with regard to the Person of Jesus. Who is this who declares that the eternal destiny of men is to be determined by their attitude to Himself?

CVIII.

Read Lk 16¹⁹⁻³¹ 23⁴³.

1. Hades is the Greek word used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word Sheol, which was the regular word for the abode of the departed. In the Old Testament it was regarded as the eternal abode of souls. But in the later Jewish literature it came to have a double meaning: (a) the final abode of the wicked (= Gehenna); (b) an *intermediate state* between death and the final

* Bruce, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 316.

† Cf. Gilbert, *Revelation of Jesus*, pp. 338-341.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 341.

judgment, in which purification was possible.* This usage must be kept in mind in considering Christ's teaching.

2. Did Jesus teach anything with regard to an intermediate state? The word *Hades* occurs only three times in His teaching, and on two of these occasions (Mt 11²³ 16¹⁸) it is obviously used in a figurative sense meaning "destruction."

3. In Lk 16¹⁹⁻³¹, however, Jesus draws aside the curtain and shows us a picture of that which follows death.

This parable "has been thought to teach the existence of two distinct compartments within Hades, in which the righteous and the unrighteous exist near each other, and yet absolutely apart, experiencing to some degree the happiness or the misery earned by their career on earth, and waiting the final reward."† And the concern of the rich man for his brethren (vv.^{27, 28}) has been taken as showing a moral amelioration.‡ But Jesus' object in the parable was not to give information about the intermediate state, but to teach a moral lesson. He uses the language and imagery of popular thought, and the expressions are obviously not to be taken literally.‡ Moreover, there is nothing in the parable to show whether the state in Hades is intermediate or final.

4. What the parable does teach in a most striking way is—(a) that there may be a complete reversal of human estimates of men and their conditions in the world to come,—contrast the two vivid pictures in vv.¹⁹⁻²¹ and ^{23, 24}; (b) that it is character and not circumstances that determines a man's destiny; (c) that retribution and a complete separation between the righteous and wicked is certain (cf. v.²⁶); and (d) that men possess enough knowledge for the needs of the moral life (v.³¹). These lessons should be considered carefully.

5. The word *Paradise* occurs in the Gospels only in Lk 23⁴³, and this solitary usage does not give us material for any definite conclusions.

Paradise is used in the OT for—(a) a "park" or pleasure-ground (e.g. Neh 2⁸, "forest," etc.); (b) the Garden of Eden (Gen 2⁸⁻¹⁰ etc.). In the later Jewish writings very mixed ideas came to be associated with it. It is noteworthy that Jesus never uses it in His public discourses. "He uses it only in His promise to the penitent robber on the cross, and the nature of the case perhaps explains this one departure from His usual practice. It was probably the word with which this rough criminal was most familiar, and which was most level to his understanding; and Christ adopts it as the one best fitted to give him the hope which he needed and could understand in his despair,—the hope of rest, the hope of translation to a scene of life and peace like Eden."§ Beyond this the expression cannot be pressed.

6. We conclude, then, that with regard to the existence of an intermediate state between death and the final judgment Jesus maintains a complete reserve. What takes place immediately after death He did not consider it necessary for us to know.

* Charles, *Eschatology*, pp. 236, 237, 301, 302; Salmond, *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, pp. 341-346.

† Cf. Salmond, pp. 347, 348.

‡ Charles, *Eschatology*, p. 344.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 351.

CIX.

Read Mt 13⁴³ 10²⁸ 18^{8, 9} 8¹² 13^{42, 50} 24⁴⁸⁻⁵¹ 25⁴⁶ Mk 9⁴³⁻⁴⁸.

1. As regards the final issues of life, the teaching of Jesus is much more full and explicit. For the righteous, as we have already seen, there is an endless life of blessedness (Study XXVII., cf. XXII.-XXV.). "The righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Mt 13⁴³).

2. Jesus several times describes the fate of the wicked as being cast into Gehenna or Hell. The word occurs in Mt 5^{22, 29, 30} 10²⁸ (= Lk 12⁵) 18⁹ (= Mk 9^{43, 45, 47}) 23^{15, 33}.

Gehenna was originally the name of the valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem, where idolatrous Israelites sacrificed their children to Moloch (2 Ch 28³, etc.), and where in later times refuse and dead bodies were cast to be consumed by fires that were kept regularly burning.* Afterwards it came to be applied to the place of final punishment for the wicked, and of retribution after Judgment.† There can be little doubt that it bears a similar meaning in the life of Jesus.

3. The place of punishment is further described as "the furnace of fire" (Mt 13^{42, 50}), "the eternal fire" (Mt 18⁸ 25⁴¹), "the unquenchable fire" (Mk 9⁴³), the place "where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched" (Mk 9⁴⁸), "the outer darkness" (Mt 8¹² 22¹³ 25³⁰), where there is "the weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mt 8¹² 13^{42, 50} 22¹³ 24⁵¹ 25³⁰). All these expressions convey the idea of intense suffering and anguish.

The frequent occurrence of the phrase "weeping and gnashing of teeth" reveals "its large place in the thought of Christ, and the deep impression made by it on the evangelist."‡ Its occurrence in Mt 13⁴² 8¹² leaves no doubt as to the sense in which Jesus used the metaphors of "fire" and "outer darkness."

4. But is the punishment of the wicked to be permanent? There seems to be little doubt that the general Jewish belief in our Lord's time was that the punishment of the wicked was, in some cases at least, final and everlasting.§ This being the current usage, it is difficult to imagine that Jesus' solemn warnings in Mt 18^{8, 9}, etc., can refer to any remedial purgatorial punishment; moreover, in these verses, being cast into hell is contrasted with entering into

* The existence of these fires for consuming refuse is however disputed (cf. Charles in Hastings' *BD*, ii. 119b). The expression "Gehenna of Fire" (Mt 5²² 18⁹) may be a reference to these purifying fires, or to the fires of Moloch, or may be merely a natural symbol for penalty, cf. Mt 13⁴² (Charles, *ibid.*; Thayer-Grimm's *Lexicon*, γήεννα).

† Charles, *Eschatology*, pp. 237, 302; Salmond, *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, pp. 359, 360.

‡ Beet, *The Last Things*, p. 168.

§ Salmond, *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, pp. 361-375; Hastings' *BD*, i. 753a.

life,—the question is one of alternative destinies. So in Mt 25⁴⁶ “the finality of destiny could scarcely be more unequivocally expressed.”* We shall return to this question to-morrow.

5. If Jesus taught eternal *punishment*, did He further teach eternal *suffering*? It can hardly be said that the evidence for the latter is as strong as for the former.

In Mt 18⁸ 25⁴¹ we have the expression “eternal (*αἰώνιος*—age-lasting) fire.” Now in Jude 7 the cities of the Plain are said to have suffered “the punishment of eternal fire,” where the expression means not that the fire was permanent, but that its *effects* were enduring; this usage forbids us to conclude that in our Lord’s life “eternal fire” implies everlasting *suffering*.† The strongest passage in support of the eternity of suffering is Mk 9⁴⁸; but it is not safe to base too much on the difficult metaphor there used.

6. The metaphors in which Jesus described the doom of the wicked were not meant to be interpreted literally, as has often been crudely done. They are figures and symbols of spiritual truths. Yet this does not mean that the suffering will be less keen than that which these metaphors suggest. Jesus desired to express in the strongest language possible the intense and awful misery of those who deliberately and wilfully rejected God’s love and fellowship.

CX.

Read Mt 11²², 24, Lk 12⁴⁷, 48, Mt 12³² 5²⁵, 26 18³⁴, 35, Mk 14²¹.

1. We study to-day some of the passages which are commonly adduced in favour of the doctrine of a terminable penalty. It is striking how few they are, and how little they yield a clear and sure support to the view in question.

2. It is maintained that the passage which speaks of the fate of Tyre and Sodom being more tolerable than that of the cities of Galilee (Mt 11²², 24), and that which distinguishes the punishment by “many stripes” and “few stripes” (Lk 12⁴⁷, 48), are inconsistent with the thought of an eternal penalty. It is asked “what a ‘more tolerable’ damnation can be?”‡ And it is asserted that “it is not possible to conceive eternal torment under the figure of a ‘few stripes.’”§ But it is a fair answer to point out that “the question in view in these passages is not the *duration* of the final

* Salmon, *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 385.

† Beet, *The Last Things*, p. 172; cf. Bruce, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 320.

‡ Eyschlag, *NT Theology*, i. 208.

§ Charles, *Exegetical*, p. 344.

judicial awards, but their righteous adjustment to different degrees of culpability.* At the same time, this teaching with regard to degrees of punishment is a fact to be kept in mind.

3. Another passage appealed to is Mt 12³², with regard to which it is asserted that "such a statement would not only be meaningless, but misleading in the highest degree, if in the next life forgiveness were a thing impossible."† But it is by no means safe to infer from this negative expression that there are some sins which will find forgiveness beyond the grave; it may be only a very strong and emphatic way of saying that for this particular sin there can be no forgiveness. Moreover, this passage emphatically and directly teaches that there are *some* sins the punishment of which is irremediable; this is brought out even more clearly in Mark's account, where reference is made to the possibility of being "guilty of an eternal sin," i.e. one of which the effect and penalty are abiding (Mk 3²⁹).

4. A third passage quoted is Mt 5^{25, 26} (= Lk 12^{58, 59}, cf. Mt 18^{34, 35}), which is thought to suggest the possibility of the discharge of the debt. But it is equally legitimate to interpret the words as describing the hopelessness and impossibility of paying the debt and escaping the penalty.

5. Hence it cannot be said that any of these passages clearly and distinctly contradict the facts which led us to believe (Study XIX., esp. para. 4) that Jesus asserted the finality and permanence of the punishment of the wicked. Moreover, in Mk 11¹ (Mt 26²⁴) Jesus solemnly declares with regard to Judas that it would have been good for him "if he had not been born." Could He have made such an assertion if there was the possibility of Judas ultimately attaining to infinite bliss?

6. Thus the doctrine of the *universal salvation* of all men appears to be actually opposed to the teaching of Jesus. With regard to the possibility of *further probation* after this life, Jesus is silent. He gives no hint in favour of it; He can hardly be said to contradict it. But, as we shall see to-morrow, He lays infinite stress upon the present.

Moreover, "probation beyond the grave, even if taught in the Bible, would not relieve the serious difficulties which surround the future punishment of sin. For, in a future probation, some might fail . . . and the fate of these would present the same difficulty as does the moral failure of men on earth. To suggest that they will be kept under repeated probation till all bow to Christ, is simply another form of universalism."‡ The question of eternal punishment is really that of whether a point is ever reached when a man's character becomes finally fixed. If a man can ever finally and irrevocably identify his will with evil, he has for ever shut himself out of the kingdom of God and pronounced upon himself a sentence of eternal punishment.

* Salmond, *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 380.

† Charles, *Eschatology*, p. 344.

‡ Beet, *The Last Things*, pp. 222, 223.

CXI.

Read Mt 7¹³⁻¹⁴, Lk 13²²⁻²⁸, Mt 18^{14, 35}, Lk 6³⁶.

1. We have seen that the teaching of Jesus points to the finality of the moral decisions of the present life. He looks forward to a time when there will be a final separation of good and evil (Mt 7²³ 13^{41, 49} 25^{10, 46}, Lk 16²⁶, etc.). It seems almost impossible to miss the significance of these passages.

"If there are possibilities of change, forgiveness, relaxation of penalty, or cessation of punishment in the future life, Christ's words at least do not reveal them. He never softens the awful responsibility of this life even by the dim adumbration of such possibilities. . . . His words do not bring the two events, death and judgement, into relation, and give no disclosure of an intermediate state with untold potentialities of Divine love and human surrender. They never traverse the principle that *this life is the scene of opportunity, and this world the theatre of human fates.*"

2. Hence, with passionate earnestness, Jesus always lays the emphasis on the present. He bids men *strive* (*ἀγωνίζεσθαι*) to enter through the narrow gate (Mt 7¹³⁻¹⁴, Lk 13²⁴). This is His answer to speculations with regard to the future (Lk 13²³); He does not think it necessary to give information on the subject, but bids men earnestly make sure of entering into life. For there is a danger that the door may be shut (Lk 13²⁵, Mt 25¹⁰).

3. "It is a grave charge, indeed, that we are each of us entrusted with,—to determine for ourselves the eternity in which we are to live. And can this be done without care, thought, conflict? But does any one object to this life being a *real* trial of men? Surely no right-minded person would shrink from a test that is real, that goes deep enough to search the very roots of evil and of good in us."†

4. And if, even so, the future destiny of some men seems very terrible, we must remember that the One who laid such infinite stress on human responsibility was also the One who was most perfectly conscious of the love of God, and most perfectly revealed it to men. It is not the will of the Father that *one* of these little ones should perish (Mt 18¹⁴); if any are ultimately excluded, it will be not God's fault, but their own. If there is to be punishment, it will be inflicted by the Father of Jesus Christ (Mt 18^{34, 35}). Any feeling of mercy that men may have is but the reflection of the infinite mercy of their Father in heaven (Lk 6³⁶). These two great

† Salmond, *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, pp. 391, 392.

‡ Dods, *The Parables of Our Lord* (second series), p. 181.

thoughts of infinite human responsibility and infinite Divine mercy, hard to reconcile, and yet both held and taught by Jesus, with unequalled force and completeness, form a fitting close to our study of His teaching.

CXII.

See Introduction, V. 3, VI.

* 1. What did Jesus teach with regard to the final Judgement?

* 2. Discuss the interpretation of Mt 25³¹⁻⁴⁶.

3. What lessons may we learn from Lk 16¹⁹⁻³¹? How much does the passage teach with regard to the future life?

4. Does Jesus give us any hints with regard to the nature of the intermediate state between death and the final Judgement?

* 5. Discuss and weigh the evidence for or against:

(a) The possibility of universal salvation.

(b) The permanence of punishment.

(c) The permanence of suffering.

(d) The possibility of future probation.

6. What was the meaning of *Gehenna*, *Hades*, *Paradise* -- (a) in Jewish usage, (b) in Jesus' teaching?

* 7. How would you sum up Jesus' teaching with regard to the future life?

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INDEX OF TEXTS



The following is an Index of the passages of the Gospels quoted in these Studies. It will enable students to find all the matter in the Studies bearing on any particular passage. It will also enable them to find the parallels of any passage in the other Gospels. When one of the parallel passages is marked with an asterisk, it means that it also should be consulted in the Index; e.g. Mt 3¹²⁻¹⁷ (= Mk 1⁹⁻¹¹ *Lk 3²¹⁻²²) . . . 81 means that, while Mt 3¹²⁻¹⁷ is dealt with in Study 81, Lk 3²¹⁻²² should also be consulted in the Index, when it will be found that the passage in question is also treated of in Study 933. When there is no asterisk, only the parallel first given is quoted in the Studies. The small numbers attached to the numbers of the Studies indicate the paragraphs, e.g. Mt 5²¹⁻²⁴ . . . 51, 1094, means that in Study 51 the passage is given for reading at the head of Study, while in Study 109 it is referred to only in paragraph 4.

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		18 ³	68

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20 ¹⁻¹⁶	8, 45 ²
20 ¹⁷⁻¹⁹ , see Mk 10 ³²⁻³⁴	
20 ²⁰⁻²⁸ (= *Mk 10 ³⁵⁻⁴⁵ , cf. Lk 22 ²⁵⁻²⁷)	10, 12 ³
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21 ¹³ , see Mk 11 ¹⁷	
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21 ²⁸⁻³²	18, 68, 92 ¹
21 ³³⁻⁴⁶ , see Mk 12 ¹⁻¹²	
21 ⁴²⁻⁴⁴ (= Mk 12 ^{10, 11} = Lk 20 ^{17, 18})	17, 90, 92 ¹ , 103
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22 ²³⁻³³ , see Mk 12 ¹⁸⁻²⁷	
22 ³⁴⁻⁴⁰ (= *Mk 12 ²⁸⁻³⁴)	64 ²
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27 ³⁷ (= Mk 15 ²⁶ = Lk 23 ³⁸)	74 ⁵
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27 ⁴⁶ (= Mk 15 ³⁴)	64 ²
27 ⁵⁴ (= Mk 15 ³⁹ = Lk 23 ⁴⁷)	80
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21-12 (= Mt 91-8 = Lk 517-26)		944-45)	54 ² , 86, 89 ¹
26 ² , 20, 85, 106 ¹		933-37 (= *Mt 181-5 = Lk	
213-17 (= Mt 99-12 = Lk		946-48)	54
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338	80 ²
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11 ³⁴⁻³⁶ , see Mt 6 ^{22, 23}	
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12 ^{11, 12} (= *Mt 10 ^{19, 20} = Mk 13 ¹¹)	89 ⁴
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12 ³⁵⁻⁴⁰ (= Mt 24 ⁴²⁻⁴⁴ = Mk 13 ³³⁻³⁶)	45 ³ , 100
12 ⁴¹⁻⁴⁸ (= *Mt 24 ⁴⁵⁻⁵¹)	101, 103, 110
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14 ¹⁻⁶	67 ¹
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17 ¹¹⁻¹⁹	17 ³
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21 ⁵⁻³⁶ , see Mk 13 ¹⁻³⁷	
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